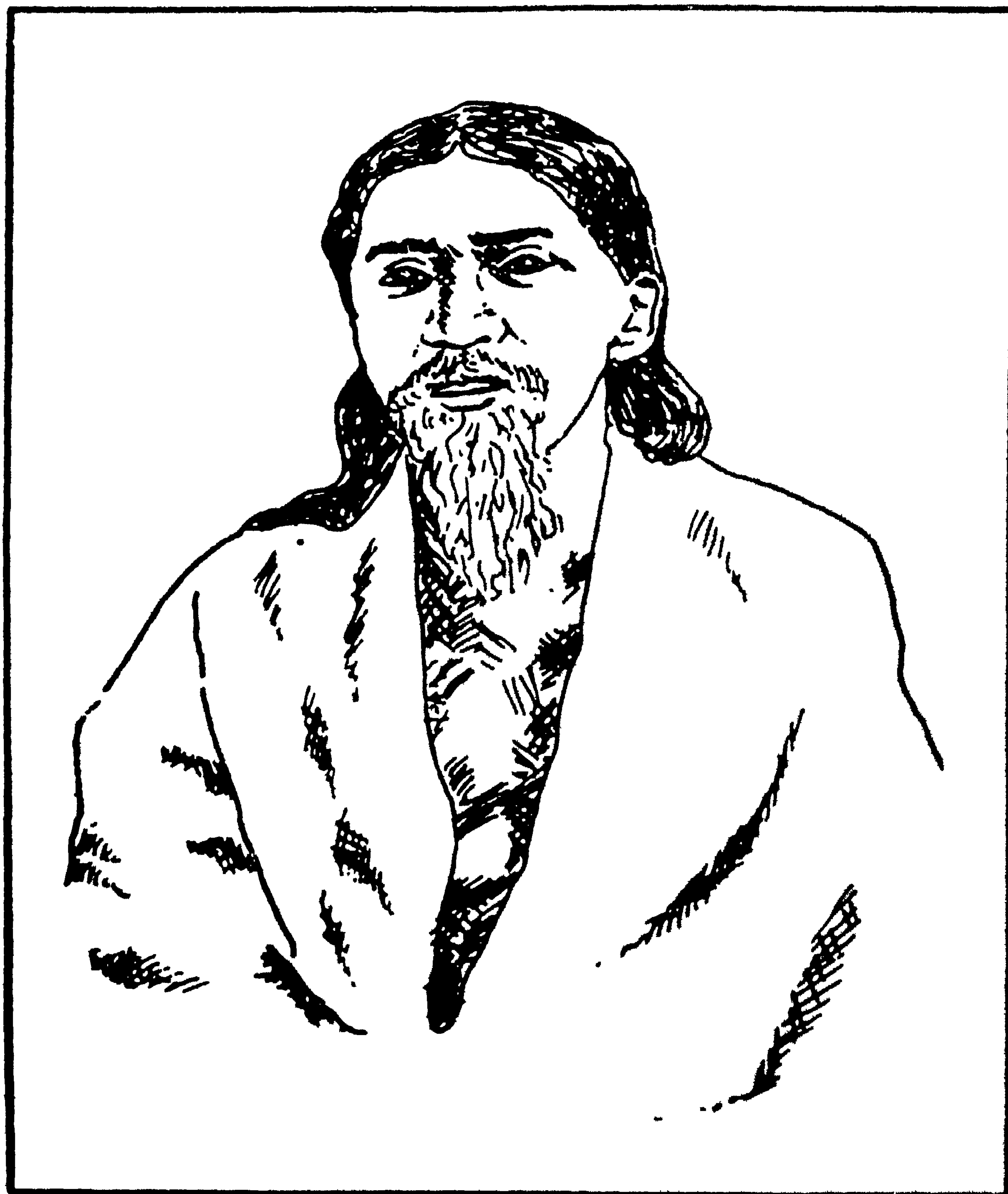
POLITICAL THINKERS OF MODERN INDIA

Volume Eleven

SRI AUROBINDO GHOSE



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# POLITICAL THINKERS OF MODERN INDIA

## VOLUME ELEVEN
## SRI AUROBINDO GHOSE

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DEEP & DEEP PUBLICATIONS
F-159, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi-110027

ISBN 81-7100-422-9 (Volume 11)
ISBN 81-7100-432-6 (Set Volumes 11-20)



Composed by Shyam Composing Agency, 3190, Mohindra Park, Delhi-110034

Printed in India at Fine Prints, 2016, Rani Bagh, Delhi-110034

Published by DEEP & DEEP PUBLICATIONS, F-159, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi-110027. Phones : 5435369, 504498.

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"Injustice is an invitation to death and prepares his (God's) advent. The moment the desire to do justice disappears from a ruling class, the moment it ceases even to respect the show of justice, from that moment its days are numbered"

—*Sri Aurobindo*

# PREFACE

It was on 15 August 1872 that Dr. K.D. Ghose and Swarnalata Devi were blessed with a prodigy child, named Sri Aurobindo who was one of the great luminaries of his times. He launched his educational career by joining Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling at the age of five years. He accompanied his two elder brothers to Britain at the age of seven and stayed at Manchester. During the years 1879-83 Aurobindo studied at St. Paul's School in London and distinguished himself among students by winning all the important prizes. He passed I.C.S. examination in 1890, but could not get through the horse-riding test. In 1893 he returned to India, and joined the service at Baroda. In 1901 he was married to Mrinalini Devi. During the period 1902-05 Sri Aurobindo took keen interest in organising secret revolutionary societies and mobilised the extremist group within the Indian National Congress. From 1905-09 he was in the forefront of the nationalist movement and was arrested but later on he was released in the Alipore conspiracy case. From 1910 to 1950, Sri Aurobindo renounced politics and devoted the rest of his life and energy to Yoga and Life Divine.

All his life Sri Aurobindo stood for an emphatic contradiction to the rationalists' pronouncement—that a man is, in the last analysis, a product of heredity plus enviroment. Aurobindo who was gifted as a great genius had the knack of transforming life's difficulties into God-sent opportunities at every step. His father, Dr. K.D. Ghose who suffered from Anglo-mania held Indian culture in contempt, and wanted his sons to be completely insulated even from their mother tongue, Bengali. Thus Sri Aurobindo began his English education at Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling at the age of five, and after a gap of two years he was purposely sent to England. In England, he had no contact with

any Indian friend at all and consequently he completely forgot his mother tongue. In addition to English, he also studied Latin and Greek in which he wrote poems and scored record marks in Cambridge. While back in India he had joined service at Baroda. But Aurobindo left his job at the College in Baroda, where he was a professor and (later Vice-Principal), to the astonishment of his colleagues and friends, and plunged into the vortex of politics. He accepted Lokmanya Gangadhar Tilak as the All India leader of the Revolutionary movement, and worked with him wholeheartedly.

Thereafter, however, Sri Aurobindo changed his field of activity from political to the spiritual, and expounded his philosophy of the Life Divine. He based his philosophy on the truth that the whole world, the universe, is a manifestation of God. The message of his philosophy is that enoblement of man in fulfilment of his destiny as a living part of the supreme divinity is possible in this very life and for that man has to surrender himself wholly to the divine and treat his life on earth as no more than to live as a part of the divine rather than himself.

The present volume is divided into two parts. Part I is a collection of selected writings of Sri Aurobindo reflecting his philosophy and his views on different aspects of national and international life. Part II contains articles assessing the role of Sri Aurobindo as a political thinker, a nationalist and a spiritual guide of humanity.

This book is a systematic piecing together of articles written by Sri Aurobindo himself and other scholars and specialists to the various journals of national and international repute. My special thanks are due to the *Quest*, *Radical Humanist*, *Bande Mataram*, *Indian and Foreign Review*, *Sikh Review*, *The Advent*, *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, *Statesman*, *Motherland*, *The Tribune*, *Karmoyogin*, and *Organiser*, from which I have drawn freely. I express my deep sense of appreciation to all the contributors for their scholarly papers and gratitude to the various librarians and eminent scholars in the field who extended their co-operation to me.

New Delhi **VERINDER GROVER**

## CHRONOLOGY

1872 : Born on August 15, in Calcutta, to Dr. K.D. Ghose and Swarnalata Devi, daughter of Rishi Rajnarain Bose.

1877 : Joined Loretto Convent School, Darjeeling.

1879 : Went to Britain with his two elder brothers and stayed with the Drewetts at Manchester.

1879-83 : Studied Latin and French under Mr. Drewett; contributed poems to the Fox Family Magazine.

1885-89 : At St. Paul's School, London, Distinguished himself as a student by claiming all the important prizes.

1890 : King's College, Cambridge, on a scholarship; 1st Part of the Tripos; passed the I.C.S. examination but deliberately neglected the riding test and was disqualified for the Service; Secretary, Indian Majlis.

1892 : Joined "Lotus and the Dagger"—a secret society devoted to the freedom struggle in India—formed in London.

1893 : Introduced to the Gaekwar of Baroda, Appointed in Baroda Service. Returns to India and proceeds to Baroda.
Contributes a series of articles reflecting radical political ideas to the Indu Prakashan of Bombay.
Begins the study of the Vedas and other mystic lore.

1901 : Marriage with Mrinalini Devi, daughter of Bhupal Chandra Bose.

1902-05 : Visits Bengal several times and organises secret revolutionary societies and mobilises the nationalists in Congress.
Begins practice of Yoga. 1905 : Partition of Bengal.

1906 : Edits *Bande Mataram* at Bipin Chandra Pal's invitation.
Resigns his Baroda job and arrives in Calcutta as the Principal of the National College.
Declares complete independence as the goal of India's national awakening. Puts forth five-fold scheme for independence struggle.

1907 : Surat Congress. Split between Nationalists and Moderates. Nationalists hold separate convention under his presidentship. Government charge of sedition against Bande Mataram.
Tagore writes his famous poem : "Aurobindo, Accept the Obeisance of Rabindra !" Sedition charge fails.

1908 : Arrested in connection with the Alipore Conspiracy Case.
Waves of Spiritual experiences come to him inside the jail.

1909 : Acquitted in the Alipore trial, Edits *Dharma* and *Karmayogin.*

1910 : Guided by his inner voice, leaves for Chandernagore and then Pondicherry. Government issues warrant against him for a so-called seditious article in the *Karmayogin.* Engrossed in Yoga at Pondicherry.

1914 : Publication of the monthly *Arya,* serialising all his major works.

1918 : Mrinalini Devi dies in Calcutta.

1920 : The Mother comes to the Ashram; Ashram begins to take shape.

1926 : Achieves siddi on what is termed as overmind, paving the way for the descent of a new Force, Supermind, capable of promoting man unto a loftier phase in evolution.

1942 : Message sent through a personal emissary to the Congress leadership to accept the proposals of the Cripps Mission.

1950 : Passed away on December 5. The body remained luminous, without the slightest sign of decomposition, for five days and was laid to rest in Mahasamadhi on December 9.

# PART I

# 1

## ENGLISH OBDURACY AND ITS REASON

SRI AUROBINDO

We seriously invite our Moderate friends to ask themselves for a reason as to why Englishmen should invariably meet all their demands for political reforms with the one unalterable answer that they are not fit to receive them. Why should John Morley whose writings and sayings are so instinct with an ardent love of liberty, so lightly flout their prayer for some concessions of a democratic nature ? He not only denies the Indians the least measure of liberty, but shuts the door of any possible hope abruptly in their face by telling them that as long as his imagination can travel into futurity, so long must India remain under personal rule. In his last Budget speech also he took the opportunity to reiterate his faith in the efficacy of personal rule for India and even went a step further and indulged in the paternal prophecy that if the English left India today, she would plunge back into rapine, blood-shed and chaos within a week. Naturally a Secretary of State who entertains such a low opinion of the Indian character would consider it the maximum of human folly to give Indians any control over the Government of their country. And the opinion of Mr. Morley only too truly represents that of the general body of the Europeans who have ever come into contact with India or thought about the problem she presents before humanity. The question is why should they all have arrived at this poor estimate of the Indian's political capability ? The answer, however, is not far to seek; we have only ourselves to thank for this cosmopolitan

contempt into which we have brought our country. The European remains today essentially as he was in the time of Aristotle, "a political animal." His nature has retained throughout the history its ingrained and inalienable political bent; polity has played the greatest part in the moulding of his life and destiny; the ideas that have irresistibly moved him to heroic strivings, passionate hopes or death-defying sufferings have been mainly those of independence, freedom, liberty; the greatest names in his history are those of political heroes or governors; the one call that has ever sung truly in his ears and commanded his unquestioning obedience is the call to the service of his country; the courting of death for the fulfilment or the upholding of the above ideas has been as natural to him as breathing; the history of his country is the history of the increasing consummation of those ideas, in faith and intellect have filled a subsidiary place. Such is the European by constitution. To him India is an insoluble riddle. How a country of three hundred million men can consent to be governed by a handful of foreigners, he simply cannot understand. He thinks of the Indian as the member of a sub-human race, outside the pale of his privileges, his code of morality, his civilization. And that new-fangled specimen of the Indian race, the educated Indian, only intensifies his contempt. That a man who has been nurtured in the literature of England, and has read the history of Europe, can still have failed to be touched by the European ideal, to be visited by an insatiable longing for liberty, and can continue, on the other hand, in a life of contented acquiescence in foreign rule, and feel happy and proud merely to serve under it and ensure its continuation, strikes the native of Europe as a most monstrous mockery, as some unimaginable and unaccountable perversion of human nature. He gradually gets to believe that whatever may be the excellence of his domestic life or the greatness of his philosophy, the Indian is by birth fit only to be a slave, and education succeeds in perfecting him only in the art of slavery. And as slavery means to the European the permanent extinction of all the nobler possibilities that lie before men, servile India ceases altogether to engage his least consideration or enlist his sympathy; let her alone with her slave's philosophy and art, thinks he, she can be of no service to the future of the human race.

And the police and politicians of India heighten further his

convictions about the lowering nature and effect of slavery, and the impossibility of India ever lifting herself to the level of civilized humanity. Her politics are the slave's politics whose method is prayer and petition and whose resentment or disapproval can find expression only in weeping and sobbing. And rebuff merely urges the Indian politician to greater efforts of supplication and to higher feats of wailing. And by such persistent mendicancy alone he aspires to win his country's liberty—liberty to which Europe has wilfully waded her way through a welter of blood after her struggles of centuries. No, cries irritated European, India can never be fit to govern herself. This is the secret of John Morley's point-blank refusal to satisfy Moderate aspirations; he has thrown to them a plaything or two, for they deserve nothing better. And because Mr. Morley loves and prizes liberty more highly than the average men, therefore has he been the more intolerant of the Moderate's pretensions, the more merciless in felling to the ground all his cherished delusions based on his inverted conception of liberty. The Partition of Bengal Mr. Morley admits to be a wrong, but he will not undo it because it is a settled fact; in other words, in dealing with dependent India he refuses to observe the rules of political morality which he has himself so clearly enunciated; in enunciating them, he would say, he had in contemplation only the rights and obligations that arise between one free people and another, and not the relationship between a ruling race and its abjectly servile subjects. All his other pronouncements point to the same moral. And have we not heard of the common English labourer who on being harangued eloquently by a Moderate Missionary about Indian grievances, asked him bluntly if he was really relating the true state of affairs, and, on being answered in the affirmative, told the Missionary without much ceremony that a people who could submit to such wrongs and could think of nothing better than the sending of representatives to England to plead for their removal, fully deserved to be ruled by an arbitrary despotism ? Unknowingly perhaps he was summarising the verdict of the civilized world on Indian politics. The money-making middle class in England say the same thing, and further strengthen their argument with the interesting inquiry. "What is to become of our boys if we leave the management of India in your hands ?" The man from the Continent or America asks plainly, "How can the whole three hundred millions of you be kept under by 70,000

tommies ?"

Ought not all this to give our Moderate friends furiously to think ? We can appreciate the humanity of their desire to emancipate the country without dragging her through the red horror of a revolution. But let them reconsider how best to achieve this end. Surely their failure to obtain anything worth having after thirty years of patient supplication culminating in the supreme tragedy of the refusal of John Morley, the one man of whom they had expected more than of any other—even to listen to their prayers with any seriousness, ought to impel them to some introspective inquiry regarding the soundness of their political faith. We also invite their thoughts to the changing attitude of England and of the whole world towards India since the declaration of the Boycott and the rise of the New Party. We conjure the Moderate to spend his best and sincerest thoughts on these two most vital topics; and once he has begun to *think*, we know the days of his creed are numbered, and there can be but one party in India, the Nationalists.

# 2

## OUR RULERS AND BOYCOTT

Sri Aurobindo

It is often paradoxically urged that every step or policy, which does not conduce to good feeling between the rulers and the ruled, the exploiters and the exploited, should be eschewed as both immoral and impolitical. And because Boycott certainly is not intended as a soothing potion for the rulers, there are some men of an unctuous humanity who look on it with alarm and distrust. We should love our country, they say, but should not allow that love to generate hatred against other nationalities; we should prefer our own manufactures and try to improve and extend them, but to eschew foreign goods is damnable. No nation, so runs the cant, cant thrive on hatred and ill-will,—though from the facts of History one might much more cogently argue that no nation has ever yet in its international relations thriven on love and philanthropy and cosmopolitanism. These copybook maxims are, of course, meant for the especial benefit of the under-dog in the struggle. They are sometimes trotted out for the benefit of the rulers, but that is merely as a literary exercise or to fill up the orthodox amount of space required for the leading articles. Nobody seriously expects the English in India to forego any of the manifold and material advantages that are bound up with their despotic possession of the country, merely out of a philanthropic tenderness for the feelings, affections or interests of the ruled. Nobody really expects them to help the development of indigenous industry at the expense of British commerce, merely because the

restoration of liberty the first condition of peace and good will. There has been good feeling between Austria and a free Italy, but between Austria dominant and Italy enslaved it was impossible.

The English have long been boycotting us in our own country. They boycotted our industries out of existence, they boycotted our noblest capacities into atrophy by denying us any share in the higher activities of national life, they boycotted us in the management of our affairs, in the defence of our country, in the making of its laws. And India impoverished, degraded, demoralized, did not look with love upon the spoiler. Now the Boycott has commenced upon the other side, but it is not an act of retaliation merely; it is much more an unravelling of the English web, a retracing of the steps towards perdition which we were forced or induced to take. Shall we continue our course to perdition, shall we refuse to retrace our steps because it cannot be done without strife and ill-feeling, because it must temporarily result in a growth of enmity between class and class ? Shall we consent to lie for ever stifled in the fatal web because the unwearing of it must enrage the master of the web ? No, the curse of alien domination must be worked out, the doom which compels it to create hatred in its making and hatred in its unmaking. When natural relations have been restored, England and India may stand side by side as equals, comrades and allies in the word's work, but until that is done, it is hypocrisy or folly suppose that we can escape God's law which make strife the straight rough way to peace and enmity the father of union. Every redeemer or redeeming force has always been compelled to say in the first stages of his mission. "I come to bring among you not peace but a sword".

# 3

## THE THUNDERER AND THE SOCIAL BOYCOTT

Sri Aurobindo

The *Times* is full of triumphant exultation over the imprisonment of Srijut Bipin Chandra Pal, and in the effusiveness of self-intoxication indulges in some very inherent talk with which we have been so familiar here in India under the name and style of Newmania. We learn for the *Englishman* that 'the *Times* points out that such men appeal to the democratic sympathies of home politicians by the judicious use of catch-words, while attempting to move the Indian masses by the support of grim, superstitious and tyrannous social laws which is the main object of enlightened British rule to mitigate'. The blatant exponents of aggressive imperalism like the *Times* in England and the *Englishman* in India simply cannot bear to think of the social boycott which has enabled the Indian community to enforce the observance of the industrial boycott on those of its members who would not take to the boycotting of English goods out of a spontaneous desire to serve their country. But for the fear of being socially ostracised, there might have been a goodly number of men, thinks the Newmania, in India as well as in England, who would have refused to go through the sacrifices entailed by the boycott. It is really most monstrous that a thing utterly impossible according to English political economy should have been made a success by means of a mere threat of exclusion from society. And in the chagrin of their thwarted expectation, in the blindness of their

passion, these unrighteous upholders of despotism rave and rant about superstitious and tyrannous social laws without a movement's calm reflexion on the underlying significance of the social boycott that has been accepted as part of their political programme by the people of Bengal.

The Indian industries have been utterly ruined, as we have had occasion to remark before, by an extremely unfair foreign competition, and the people formerly employed in them have all had to fall back on agriculture for a livelihood. With the increasing population the wages in agriculture which were already low, have become inconceivably less till the poor Indian is now faced with a mercilessly recurrent famine through sheer want of means to purchase his food with. We know that until other sources of employment are created—in the shape of industries for the relieving of the surplusage that has brought down the wages of agricultural labour, the Indian labour has no other possible way of escape from the awful fate—death from starvation that stares him in the face. It is in order to avoid the possibility of just such a disaster overtaking their people that Germany, America and other countries of the world surrounded themselves with tariff walls against the invasion of their markets by English and other alien-made commodities. And Indians know to a certainty that it is because they were not allowed by their foreign conqurors to fortify themselves with a similar barrier against the encroachment of non-indigenous manufacturers, that the terrible visitation from which the independent countries have been able to save themselves, has come upon them. Have they not spent years in vain prayers to their rulers for some kind of protection ? And how they have at last found out the utter futility of praying to those how cannot hear because they *will* not hear. It is no zealous devotion to the abstract principles of free trade that keeps the Indian Government back from introducing into India a policy of protection; if that were so, Lord Curzon would not have legislated to protect Indian sugar. The one act of Lord Curzon did more than anything else to take the scales finally off our eyes. Since then we have become convinced that it is an uncompromising and monstrous selfishness, a burning desire to enrich herself in utter indifference to the economic interests of India, that is at the bottom of England's policy of free trade between the subject country and herself. We have been consequently driven in the ultimate resort to rely on our

unaided endeavours, with what success the world now well knows. The declaration of an industrial boycott by a subject country is the equivalent of protective legislation in an independent country. When America felt the need for protection, she got it through the enactment of her legislature. What was the sanction behind ? The organized force of the State. We too wanted protection, and very badly indeed; we have been unable to move the Indian legislature under alien guardianship to the fulfilment of our wishes, and have therefore declared a boycott ourselves. What is the sanction behind it ? The moral coercion of our society. At the time America adapted protection, there were a good many interests in the country that were opened to it; but it was passed into law in the teeth of that opposition, because the majority of Americans were in its favour. The Anti-Protectionist interests in America have since grown larger, but she still remains wedded to protection. Will the *Times* dare for a moment to accuse America of grimness, superstition and tyranny because she passed an economic measure in uttar disregard of the wishes of a dissenting minority who have ever since been made to conform to it by the organized force of the State which could crush them in no time if they ranged themselves actively against it ? The *Times* would only cover itself with ridicule if it suggested anything of the kind. Why should it then be wrong for India to adopt a protective measure simply because she had to enforce it on a recalcitrant and numerically insignificant minority by means of a social boycott, that is, by the sanction of a moral coercion which the Indian community can exercise effectively on its members ? And we may well ask, which is the superior, humaner sanction, the policeman with his chastising rod or the priest refusing to minister to spiritual wants ? Which of the two is more difficult, which is the indication of a higher spirituality ?

As a fact, the success of the boycott movement in Bengal through the compulsion of the moral and spiritual forces that have so long regulated the Indian society, is the first great moral triumph that India has won over its alien bureaucracy. A government that has no roots in the soil, and stands in moral and spiritual relationship with the people of the country, is bound to find itself baffled and worsted by them after they have awakened to an adequate realization of the moral and spiritual strength and potentiality of their own society. One almost begins to suspect

that the *Times* and the rest of the Imperialist band are becoming increasingly conscious of their utter helplessness in the face of this renascent energy, and hence the vehemence and venom with which they have entered upon the policy of abuse, the sole and traditional weapon of people who have been deadened by the lust of power to all sense of humanity.

# 4

## SWADESHISM

SRI AUROBINDO

The cyclic renewals of the human spirit in the races and peoples of the world constitute the most fascinating phenomena of History. Human progress seems always to have depended on the reawakening touch of some divine impulse whenever the spirit of man flagged and failed. Not a nation in the world but was sometime or other perilously near its doom, when all the attributes that lie on the Godward side of humanity went one by one, leaving an awful emptiness behind of unbelief, cynicism and despair. Some sank from this to death, but most were borne back to life by the resurgent wave of a fertilising flood that restored to them all their pristine possessions,—knowledge, faith, hope, will, daring, defiance of death. These visitations of immortality in man have been known by different names such as Buddhism, Christianity, the Renascence, Vaishnavism and the like. Asia forgetful, decadent, dying in "the scorching drought of modern vulgarity" needed most the purifying ablution of such a wave; and it has now come at its appointed hour crested with all the glory of her own old ideals, giving India back the long lost treasure of her race, the passion for self-knowledge, called by us National Education. And no better proof could be found of the intrinsic genuineness of the movement amongst us today than this instinctive returning of the nation upon the age-long intention of its race. After vainly casting about for salvation from without, India sees it now with no uncertain eye offered to her from within; she sees at last the promise of her

future in the revelation of her past. To know herself, to know what she has done that she may ascertain what she is to do, this renascent aspiration is at the heart of the cry that has gone up so spontaneously for education on national lines, and has taken tangible shape in the National Schools and Colleges. And in the coming to fruit of this grand reflorescence lies the chance of India being saved, the only safeguard against her being lured to death by the seducing blaze of material splendour with which Europe so dazzles her vision. It is only by growing to know herself that she can learn to shun like deadly poison all those misnamed ideals so dear to the West : the industrialism that dwarfs the worker down to the pints point over which it is his miserable lot to work out his very life; the commercialism that floods the world with ugly and worthless wares owing nought to beauty or religion; the piety that results in the sending of panoplied missions with more reliance on gunpowder than on God; the gluttonous earth-hunger whetted with cruelty, carnage and all manner of godlessness cloaked by the cunning of a mere word, Imperialism.

And with disenchantment will come a nearer view of her own ideal—the one that in the flower of her days she had dared to set before herself, and succeeded in realising, summing up the highest effort and the highest achievement of the human race. It was the working out, after centuries of patient endeavour and single-minded concentration, of a synthesis in which knowledge and religion blended in an organic unity. It was the final laying to rest of that schism between *faith* and *fact* which has moved like an avenging angel through the civilization of the world lying beyond the ripplemark of Hinduism, condemning them to un-reason and darkness, or to restlessness of spirit, adandonment of God, self-intoxication. Has not Europe, to take the very last instance, been the scene of this conflicting dualism, resting now on *faith* paling off to superstition, and again on *fact* leading to oblivion of God ? From this wasting tragedy of the inner life India has been spared for ages by the priceless discovery of her philosopher-priests. And it was no mere faith, no mere theory, this conforming of science to religion, nor a mere inference of reason, but a demonstrable reality made attainable through a definite process of culture, built up step by step with infinite patience and labour by those aristocrats of humanity—incomparably the greatest that ever lived. The Indian peasant who worships the gods and goddesses and can talk

philosophy, and the Indian sage who talks philosophy and can worship the gods and goddesses, both embody the highest meaning of Indian History, symbols of a race-consciousness, keepers of an ancestral faith, dimmed in the memory by the mist of time. The finding of the light that will disperse the mist, the recovery of the wealth that it hides,—and the greatest work of the Asiatic Renascence is done.

It is this larger purpose, this message India has for humanity, that must ever be the inspiration of all our endeavour. Viewed from the height of it alone can our schemes of political and economic renovation acquire that sanctity and significance that will have the power of rousing the Indian heart to the passion of enthusiasm, of nerving it for a struggle to the finish with that death-proof courage and calmness, of which the world had, only the other day, an occular demonstration in Japan. India needs wealth and abundance because her people with no food in their stomach and no clothes on their back cannot possibly have the time or the inclination either to think of their country's destiny or to remember her old-time glories. India needs self-rule because without it she cannot possibly bring about those conditions under which only she would be able to re-enthrone the faith that is in her in its integrity. Our work has failed in the past because our workers have failed to give the people a faith in the future holding a higher promise than the mere secularity of autonomy and wealth. These pseudo-divinities of the West can never be with us Indians ends in themselves. Each of them oblivious of India must be re-taught to look upon as merely the means of the supreme end—the mission it is hers to carry all over the world. Political serfdom and economic paralysis, the two greatest enemies of our regeneration, can be trodden underfoot and annihilated only by an India quickened by this faith in her destiny.

Signs of hope are not wanting; the glimmerings of the dawn-light already fringe the heavens. Swadeshism is spreading far and fast all over the land, bringing nearer each day that great and glorious one which will dawn on a revivified India, when it will once again be a pride to live in her, a privilege to die for her.

# 5

## CASTE AND DEMOCRACY

SRI AUROBINDO

We fear our correspondent who has criticised on another page the consistency of our views on Caste, has hardly taken any trouble to understand the real drift of our articles. His attitude seems to be that we must be either entirely for caste as it at present exists or entirely against the institution and condemn it root and branch in the style of the ordinary unthinking social reformer. Because, on the one hand, we protested against the ignorant abuse of the institution often indulged in simply because it is different in form and spirit from European institutions, and, on the other hand emphasised the perversions of its form and spirit and the necessity of its transformation in the pure spirit of Hinduism, our correspondent imagines that we are inconsistent and guilty of adopting successively two different and incompatible attitudes. Our position is perfectly clear and straightforward. Caste was originally an arrangement for the distribution of functions in society, just as much as class in Europe, but the principle on which the distribution was based in India was peculiar to this country. The civilization of Europe has always been preponderatingly material and the division of classes was material in its principles and material in its objects, but our civilization has always been preponderatingly spiritual and moral, and caste division in India had a spiritual object and a spiritual and moral basis. The division of classes in Europe had its root in a distribution of powers and rights and developed and still developes through a struggle of conflicting

interests; its aim was nearly the organization of society for its own sake and mainly indeed for its economic convenience. The division of castes in India was conceived as a distribution of duties. A man's caste depended on his *dharma*, his spiritual, moral and practical duties, and his *dharma* depended on his *swadhav*, his temperament and inborn nature. A Brahmin was a Brahmin not by mere birth, but because he discharged the duty of preserving the spiritual and intellectual elevation of the race, and he had to cultivate the spiritual temperament and acquire the spiritual training which could alone qualify him for the task. The Kshatriya was a Kshatriya not merely because he was the son of warriors and princes, but because he discharged the duty of protecting the country and preserving the high courage and manhood of the nation, and he had to cultivate the princely temperament and acquire the strong and lofty Samurai training which alone fitted him for his duties. So, it was with the Vaisya whose function was to a mass wealth for the race and the Sudra who discharged the humbler duties of service without which the other castes could not perform their share of labour for the common good. This was what we meant when we said that caste was a socialistic institution. No doubt, there was a gradation of social respect which placed the function of the Brahmin at the summit and the function of the Sudra at the base, but this inequality was accidental, external, *vyavaharik*. Essentially there was, between the devout Brahmin and the devout Sudra, no inequality in the single *Virat Purush* of which each was a necessary part. Chokha Mela, the Maratha Pariah, became the guru of Brahmins proud of their caste purity; the Chandala taught Shankaracharya : for the Brahman was revealed in the body of the Pariah and in the Chandal there was the utter presence of Shiva the Almighty. Heredity entered into caste divisions, and in the light of the conclusions of modern knowledge who shall say erroneously ? But it entered into it as a subordinate element. For Hindu civilization being spiritual, based its institutions on spiritual and moral foundations and subordinated the material elements and material considerations. Caste, therefore, was not only an institution which ought to be immune from the cheap second-hand denunciations so long in fashion, but a supreme necessity without which Hindu civilization could not have developed its distinctive character or worked out its unique mission.

But to recognize this is not to debar ourselves from pointing out its later perversions and desiring its transformation. It is the nature of human institutions to degenerate, to lose their vitality, and decay, and the first sign of decay is the loss of flexibility and oblivion of the essential spirit in which they were conceived. The spirit is permanent, the body changes; and a body which refuses to change, must die. The spirit expresses itself in many ways while itself remaining essentially the same, but the body must change to suit its changing environments if it wishes to live. There is no doubt that the institution of cases degenerated. It ceased to be determined by spiritual qualifications which, once essential, have now come to her subordinate and even immaterial and is determined by the purely material tests of occupation and birth. By this change it has set itself against the fundamental tendency of Hinduism which is to insist on the spiritual and subordinate the material and thus lost more of its meaning. The spirit of caste arrogance, exclusiveness and superiority came to dominate it instead of the spirit of duty, and the change weakened the nation and helped to reduce us to our present condition. It is these perversions which we wish to see set right. The institution must transform itself so as to fulfil its essential and permanent object under the changed conditions of modern times. If it refuses to change, it is become a mere social survival and crumbles to pieces. If it transforms itself, it will yet play a great part in the fulfilment of civilization.

Our correspondent accuses us of attempting to corrupt society with the intrusion of the European idea of Socialism. Socialism is not an European idea, it is essentially Asiatic and especially Indian. What is called Socialism in Europe, is the old Asiatic attempt to effect a permanent solution of the economic problem of society which will give man leisure and peace to develop undisturbed his higher self. Without Socialism democracy would remain a tendency that never reached its fulfilment, a rule of the masses by a small aristocratic or monied class with the consent and votes of the masses, or a tyranny of the artisan classes over the rest. Socialistic democracy is the only true democracy, for without it we cannot get the equalised and harmonised distribution of functions, is part of the community existing for the good of all and not struggling for its own separate interests, which will give humanity as a whole the necessary conditions in which it can turn its best energies to its

higher development. To realize those conditions is also the aim of Hindu civilization and the original intention of caste. The fulfilment of Hinduism is the fulfilment of the highest tendencies of human civilization and it must include in its sweep the most vital impulses of modern life. It will include democracy and Socialism also, purifying them, raising them above the excessive stress on the economic adjustments which are the means, and teaching them to fix their eyes more constantly and clearly on the moral, intellectual and spiritual perfection of mankind, which is the aim.

# 6

## "BANDE MATARAM" PROSECUTION*

SRI AUROBINDO

The prosecution of the *Bande Mataram*, the most important of the numerous Press prosecutions recently institute by the bureaucracy, commenced with a flourish of trumpets, eagerly watched by a hopeful Anglo-India Press, has ended in the most complete and dismal fiasco such as no Indian Government has ever had to experience before in a sedition case. The failure has not been the result of any lukewarmness or half-heartedness in the conduct of the prosecution or any unwillingness to convict on the part of the trying Magistrate. The Police left no stone unturned to get a particular man convicted, the Standing Counsel did not hesitate to press every possible point and make the most of every stray scrap or faint shadow of evidence against the accused, the Magistrate was a Civilian Magistrate whose leanings have never been concealed, the same who gave two years to the *Yugantar* Printer, who sent Bipin Pal before a subservient Bengali Magistrate

*In August 1907, the Nationalist organ *Bande Mataram* fell a victim to the vigorous campaign of press prosecutions launched by the then bureaucracy on the ground of its publishing a letter to the Editor under the caption of "Politics for Indians" and the official translations of seditious *Yugantar* articles in its issues of June, 27 and July 26 respectively. The prosecution opened in the court of the Chief Presidency Magistrate on August, 26 and terminated on September 23. The real object of the bureaucracy in starting this prosecution was to convict Aurobindo Ghose, the master-mind behind the *Bande Mataram* daily, but the prosecution ended in a most dismal failure to the immense frustration and rage of the whole Anglo-Indian Press.

with a plain hint to give him a heavy punishment, who sentenced Sushil Kumar to fifteen stripes, who brushed aside the evidence of barristers in favour of Police testimony, and every paragraph of whose judgment in the present case shows that he would readily have dealt out a handsome term of hard labour if the evidence had afforded him the slightest justification for a conviction. All the winning cards in the game are in the hands of the bureaucracy in such a trial. They can command the best legal knowledge in the country, they have a detective and secret service system which for political purposes is popularly supposed to be second only in its elaborateness to the Russian, they have their own servants sitting on the Bench to try a case in which they are deeply interested, there is no trouble about juries who might be unwilling to convict, the Police have unlimited powers of search and can even turn the Post Office into a branch of the detective department, their methods of discovering witnesses are various and effective; yet with all this they were unable to bring forward a single scrap of convincing evidence to prove that the particular man they were bent on running down, was the Editor. The Magistrate in his judgment and the affectionate Friend of India in Chowringhee in his comments have drawn from this failure the lesson that the laws against the freedom of the Press should be made more stringent. An ordinary unilluminated intelligence would have come rather to the conclusion that the executive authorities would do well to reform their method of instituting proceedings in a political trial.

The one important lesson of the *Bande Mataram* case is the light which it throws on the spirit in which the bureaucracy have been instituting the political prosecutions and persecutions which have latterly seemed to be their only reason of existence. This spirit has been exposed in a lurid and sensational manner in the Comilla case, when an innocent man with difficulty escaped the gallows to which a political prosecution had condemned him. But in the *Bande Mataram* case also there has been a less sensational though sufficient exposure of the same sinister spirit. What has been the whole meaning and aim of this prosecution? Certainly not an honest impartial desire to vindicate outraged law and check without personal animus or any purely political aim, a wanton tendency to disturb the public tranquility, which would be the only excuse for a sedition prosecution. It has been an obvious

attempt to crush a particular paper and a particular individual. The bureaucracy has sought to cripple or silence the *Bande Mataram* because it has been preaching with extraordinary success a political creed which was dangerous to the continuance of bureaucratic absolutism and was threatening to become a centre of strength round which many Nationalistic forces might gather. It has sought to single out and silence a particular individual because it chose to think that he was, as the *Friend of India* expresses it, the master-mind behind the policy of the paper. If we are challenged to justify this assertion, it will be sufficient to point to the conduct of this case from its very inception. The *Bande Mataram* has been for over a year attacking without fear and without disguise the present system of Government and advocating a radical and revolutionary change. It has advocated that change on grounds of historical experience, the first principles of politics and the necessity of national self-preservation. It has not minced matters or sought to conceal revolutionary aspirations under the veil of moderate professions or ambiguous phraseology. It has not concealed its opinion that the bureaucracy cannot be expected to transfer itself, that the people of India and not the people of England must save India, and that we cannot hope for any boons but must wrest what we desire by strong national combination from unwilling hands. Hundreds of articles have appeared in the paper in this vein and the bureaucrats had only to pick and choose. But they have not attacked one of these articles, nor did their Counsel venture to cite even a single one of them to prove seditious intention. The fact is that however dangerous such a propaganda may be to an absolutist handful desiring to perpetuate their irresposible rule, no Government pretending to call itself civilized can prosecute it as seditious without forfeiting all claim to the last vestige of the world's respect. But though the paper could not be characterised as seditious, it was highly inconvenient, and there was a growing clamour which extended even to the cloudy home of the thunderer in London, for its prosecution and, if possible, suppression. And so watch is kept to find the paper tripping over some trifle, for which it can be hauled up and got into trouble on a side issue. What is the matter for which the *Bande Mataram* was prosecuted ? A reprint of the official translations of certain articles from a vernacular paper, translations issued as part of a case in the law-courts and

reproduced as such,—that is one count; and an insignificant correspondence which does not even profess to give voice to the policy of the paper—that is the second and third; and there is no other. The *Yugantar* was prosecuted on articles expressing its essential policy; the *Sandhya* has been proceeded against on articles expressing its view on important matters; but it was sought to crush the *Bande Mataram* partly for a technical offence and partly on a side-issue. So eagerly, so carelessly is the casual chance given snatched at that the executive do not even trouble to know what is the article on which action is being taken; they give sanction to prosecute on an advertisement in the righthand corner of the paper, and but for the compassionate correction vouchsafed by an officer of the company, the mistake would have had to be rectified in the course of the trial itself. Sanction is given to prosecute a nameless Editor and the Police at once proceed to ask for a warrant against Aurobindo Ghose. It is in evidence that they had nothing better to go on than hearsay. But they had no hesitation in immediately pouncing on one particular writer of the *Bande Mataram,* without possessing the least scrap of evidence against him. Obviously they cannot have done this without instructions. It was popularly believed that Srijut Aurobindo Ghose was all in all on the *Bande Mataram* staff, that all the best articles were written by him, that he gave the tone of the paper and that it could not last without him. Why did the Police take a body-warrant against Aurobindo Ghose to the office and why, having taken it, did they not arrest him ? Obviously they took it because they thought that they would find plenty of evidence against him in the search, and they did not execute it because they found that not a scrap of proof rewarded their efforts. After that there was a pause till Anukul Mukherjee's testimony was secured, and on that flimsy evidence the trial was started. Had it been honestly intended to deal only with the Editor, whoever he might turn out to be, the proceedings against Aurobindo Ghose would have been given up, but the Police made no secret of the fact that it was this one man who was wanted and that no other, whatever the evidence against him, would be thought worth capture. Even when the case for the prosecution was complete without any evidence fit to raise more than a flimsy presumption, the Standing Counsel would not give up, but in an outrageous address in which he rode roughshod over the higher traditions of his office, pressed weak

# 7

## SWARAJ AND THE COMING ANARCHY

SRI AUROBINDO

Whoever tries to read the signs of the time, will be no little perplexed at first by their complexity. The beginnings of a great revolution which is destined to change the whole political, social and economic life of a great country, are always full of ebb and flow, perplexing by the multitude of details and their continual interaction. The struggle going on at Tuticorin exemplifies this remarkable diversity and intermingling of numerous tendencies, each of which would in ordinary times be a separate movement. Society is full of anomalies which clash and jostle together in an inextricable chaos of progress and reaction; economic India is in the throes of a violent transition from the old mediaeval basis of life to the modern; politics is at a parting of the ways. All these various and independent activities of the Indian body politic unite into a huge and confused movement of which the main impulse is political and the others are largely inspired, if not motived, by the passions which are at the root of the political upheaval. Great issues of economics wear the guise of a political conflict; immense political aspirations become mixed up with a purely industrial struggle between indigenous labour and foreign capital. So also in society the old reform movement which was a separate and ineffectual attempt to transform our society according to European ideas, has given place to disquiet and aspiration in the society itself. So long the educated men of the upper castes debated among themselves about the better ordering of society, and outside

discover any solution of these great problems or any sure line of policy by which the tangled issues of so immense a movement can be kept free from the possibility of inextricable anarchy in the near future. Anarchy will come. This peaceful and inert nation is going to be rudely awakened from a century of passivity and flung into a world-shaking turmoil out of which it will come transformed, strengthened and purified. There is a chaos which is the result of inertia and the prelude of death, and this was the state of India during the last century. The British peace of the last fifty years was like the quite green grass and flowers covering the corruption of a sepulchre. There is another chaos which is the violent reassertion of life and it is this chaos into which India is being hurried today. We cannot repine at the change, but are rather ready to welcome the pangs which help the storm which purifies, the destruction which renovates.

One thing only we are sure of, and one thing we wear as a life-belt which will buoy us up on the waves of the chaos that is coming on the land. This is the fixed and unalterable faith in an overruling purpose which is raising India once more from the dead, the fixed and unalterable intention to fight for the renovation of her ancient life and glory. Swaraj is the life-belt, Swaraj the pilot, Swaraj the star of guidance. If a great social revolution is necessary, it is because the ideal of Swaraj cannot be accomplished by a nation bound to forms which are no longer expressive of the ancient and immutable Self of India. She must change the rags the past so that her beauty may be readorned. She must alter her bodily appearance so that her soul may be newly expressed. We need not fear that any change will turn her into a second-hand Europe. Her individuality is too mighty for such a degradation, her soul too calm and self-sufficient for such a surrender. If again an economical revolution is inevitable, it is because the fine but narrow edifice of her old industrial life will not allow of Swaraj in commerce and industry. The industrial energies of a free and perfect national life demand a mightier scope and wider channels. Neither need we fear that the economic revolution will land us in the same diseased and disordered state of society as now offends the nobler feelings of humanity in Europe. India can never so far forget the teaching which is her life and the secret of her immortality as to become a replica of the organized selfishness, cruelty and greed which is dignified in the West by the name

of Industry. She will create her own conditions, find out the secret of the order which Socialism in vain struggles to find and teach the peoples of the earth once more how to harmonize the world and the spirit.

If we realize this truth, if we perceive in all that is happening a great and momentous transformation necessary not only for us but for the whole world, we shall fling ourselves without fear or misgivings into the times which are upon us. India is the *guru* of the nations, the physician of the human soul in its profounder maladies; she is destined once more to new-mould the life of the world and restore the peace of the human spirit. But Swaraj is the necessary condition of her work and before she can do the work, she must fulfil the condition.

# 8

## ASIATIC DEMOCRACY

Sri Aurobindo

Asia is not Europe and never will be Europe. The political ideals of the West are not the mainspring of the political movements in the East, and those who do not realize this great truth, are mistaken; for they suppose that the history of Europe is a sure and certain guide to India in her political development. A great deal of the political history of Europe will be repeated in Asia, no doubt; Democracy has travelled from the East to the West in the shape of Christianity, and after a long struggle with the feudal instincts of the Germanic races has returned to Asia transformed and in a new body. But when Asia takes back Democracy into herself, she will first transmute it in her own temperament and make it once more Asiatic. Christianity was an assertion of human equality in the spirit, a great assertion of the unity of the divine spirit in man, which did not seek to overthrow the established systems of government and society but to inform them with the spirit of human brotherhood and unity. It was greatly hampered in this work by the fact that the European races were in a state of transition from the old Aryan civilization of Greece and Rome to one less advanced and enlightened. The German nations were wedded to military civilization which was wholly inconsistent with the ideals of Christianity, and the new religion in their hands became a thing quite unrecognizabled to the Asiatic mind which had engendered it. When Mahomedanism appeared, Christianity vanished out of Asia, because it had lost its meaning.

Mahomad tried to re-establish the Asiatic gospel of human equality in the spirit. All men are equal in Islam,—whatever their social position or political power, nor is any man debarred from the full development of his manhood by his birth or low original station in life. All men are brothers in Islam and the bond of religious unity overrides all other divisions and differences. But Islam also was limited and imperfect, because it confined the ideal of brotherhood and equality to the limits of a single creed, and was further deflected from its true path by the rude and undeveloped races which it drew into its embrace. Another revelation of the old truth is needed.

India from ancient times had received the Gospel of Vedanta which sought to establish the divine unity of man in spirit but in order to secure an ordered society in which she could develop her spiritual insight and perfect her civilization, she had invented the system of caste which by corruptions and departures from caste ideals come to be an obstacle to the fulfilment in society of the Vedantic ideal. From the time of Buddha to that of the saints of the Maharashtra every great religious awakening has sought to restore the ancient meaning of Hinduism and reduce caste to its original subordinate importance and a social convenience to exercise the spirit of caste pride and restore that of brotherhood and the eternal principles of love and justice in society. But the feudal spirit had taken possession of India and the feudal spirit is wedded to inequality and the pride of caste.

When the feudal system was broken in Europe by the rise of the middle class, the ideals of Christianity began to emerge once more to light, but by this time the Christianity Church had itself become feudalized, and the curious spectacle presents itself of Christian ideals struggling to establish themselves by the destruction of the very institution which had been created to preserve Christianity. When the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity were declared at the time of the French Revolution and mankind demanded that society should recognize them as the foundation of its structure, they were associated with a fierce revolt against the relics of feudalism and against the travesty of the Christian religion which had become an integral part of that feudalism. This was the weakness of European Democracy and the source of its failure. It took as its motive the rights of man and not the *Dharma* of humanity; it appealed to the selfishness of the power classes against

the pride of the upper; it made hatred and internecine war the permanent allies of Christian ideals and wrought an inextricable confusion which is the modern malady of Europe. It was in vain that the genius of Mazzini re-discovered the heart of Christianity and sought to remodel European ideas; the French Revolution had become the starting-point of European Democracy and coloured the European mind. Now that Democracy has returned to Asia, its cradle and home, it will be purged of its foreign elements and restored to its original purity. The movements of the nineteenth century in India were European movements, they were coloured with the hues of the West. Instead of seeking for strength in the spirit, they adopted the machinery and motives of Europe, the appeal to the rights of humanity or the equality of social status and an impossible dead level which Nature has always refused to allow. Mingled with these false gospels was a strain of hatred and bitterness, which showed itself in the condemnation of Brahminical priestcraft, the hostility to Hinduism and the ignorant breaking away from the hallowed traditions of the past. What was true and eternal in that past was likened to what was false or transitory, and the nation was in danger of losing its soul by an insensate surrender to the aberrations of European materialism. Not in this spirit was India intended to receive the mighty opportunity which the impact of Europe gave to her. When the danger was greatest, a number of great spirits were sent to stem the tide flowing in from the West and recall her to her mission; for, if she had gone astray, the world would have gone astray with her. Her mission is to point back humanity to the true source of human liberty, human equality, human brotherhood. When man is free in spirit, all other freedom is at his command; for the Free is the Lord who cannot be bound. When he is liberated from delusion, he perceives the divine equality of the world which fulfils itself through love and justice, and this perception transfuses itself into the law of government and society. When he has perceived this divine equality, he is brother to the whole world, and in whatever position he is placed he serves all men as his brothers by the law of love, by the law of justice. When this perception becomes the basis of religion, of philosophy, of social speculation and political aspiration, then will liberty, equality and fraternity take their place in the structure of society and the *Satya Yuga* return. This is the Asiatic reading of Democracy, which India must re-discover for herself before she

can give it to the world. It is the *Dharma* of every man to be free in soul, bound to service not by compulsion but by love; to be equal in spirit, apportioned his place in society by his capacity to serve society, not by the interested selfishness of others; to be in harmonious relations with his brother men, linked to them by mutual love and service, not by shackles of servitude, or the relations of the exploiter and the exploited, the eater and the eaten. It has been said that Democracy is based on the rights of man; it has been replied that it should rather take its stand on the duties of man; but both rights and duties are European ideas. *Dharma* is the Indian conception in which rights and duties lose the artificial antagonism created by a view of the world which makess selfishness the root of action, and regain their deep and eternal unity. *Dharma* is the basis of Democracy which Asia must recognize, for in this lies the distinction between the soul of Asia and the soul of Europe. Through *Dharma* the Asiatic evolution fulfils itself; this is her secret.

# 9

## A NEW WEAPON

SRI AUROBINDO

The national movement in Bengal, like a great river after it has left the first stages of its long journey seawards, is gradually beginning to deepen its flow and widen its bed. New tributaries are pouring into swell its volume. Whoever wishes to held his countrymen, is helping the movement; for its destiny is to gather all the scattered energies in the land and draw them to one head. Especially is it a subject for rejoicing that the minds of the young men are full of a desire to help their fellows and alleviate their sufferings. The action of the volunteers in the *Ardhodaya Yoga* was of good omen. It was bound to bear fruit by accustoming the minds of our boys to regard love and service as the seed of life. As soon as this feeling becomes general and powerful, we shall no longer have to listen to the wearisome reiteration of the old plaintive formula that we have no unity. When a people is barred from political activity, national unity cannot be achieved in the way in which other countries have achieved it. Congresses and Conferences can bring us together physically, but, divorced from all responsible activity, they provide us with no ground of actual unity. The true unity is that of the heart and it can only be based upon mutual love and service. Whatever discord exists between class and class in our midst, cannot be removed by any political means, because we have not the weapons of which the European countries could make use to effect political unity. What can we offer to the Mahomedans to induce them to join us ? In other countries unity

has been effected partly by common interests, partly by the strong hand of power. In our present condition we are debarred from the use of power, and if there are common interests, only a small sect'on of the Mahomedan community have been able to realize it. The advantages which we can offer to them belong to a future more or less remote, those which the Government has to offer them are immediate and quite tangible in the present. It is not therefore by harping on our common interests that we can hope to effect a deep-seated or permanent unity between the Hiudus and Mahomedans on Bengal. There remains only the common sentiment to which we can appeal. Here also we are confronted with serious difficulties in the way of any such common sentiment being established as will bear the strain of diversity in creed and customs. Morever, the sentiment of the Mahomedans is stronger in respect of religion than of nationality. Their eyes are fixed rather on Mecca than on Delhi. Whatever community of sentiment they have, is more with their co-religionists outside than with their fellow countrymen in India. If we are to create a common sentiment, it can only be by awakening in their hearts the sentiment of common brotherhood with their Hindu fellow countrymen. To do this we must first nourish the sentiment ourselves. A political show or talk of brotherhood will not serve, for it will ring false to the ear of feeling; and no true unity can be effected by insincere professions. But if our young men who are now beginning to get more and more the vision of the Mother, are allowed to nourish that sentiment in their hearts, their natural feeling of brotherhood with all sons of the Mother, will drive them to experience the same feeling with regard to the Mahomedans. Then by the natural conversion of brotherly feeling into love and service the gulf which is yawning wider and wider between the two communities may be bridged. It cannot be done by diplomacy, it cannot be done by logic, it can only be done by the appeal of heart to heart. When our Mahomedan brothers find the sentiment of nationality manifesting itself in deeds of love and service, the irresistible claim of heart upon heart will establish itself, and they will then begin to understand nationalism in its truth and beauty. Then will a common sentiment have been created, which by persistent habit will become a part of our nature. Only in this way can the Mahomedan difficulty be solved under the present political circumstances of the country.

The instance of the Mahomedans is the most salient, but the same principle applies to all the perversities which keep the people of India disunited. We approve of the resolution passed about the Namasudras at the Pabna Conference, but we are aware that no resolution of a Conference, mainly composed of English-educated Indians, can solve a problem peculiar to Hindu society. We have suggested that a Panchayat of Brahmins should be formed to move in the matter. But we regard this only as a piece of necessary social machinery. It will not solve the question permanently. The only thing that can meet the complex problems presented by the present state of Hindu society, is the gospel of a single common brotherhood translated into acts of love and service. This will bind heart to heart and when there is the inner unity, the outer must inevitably follow. That this is the true path, the great example of the *Ardhodaya Yoga* has shown conclusively. Who does not know that this single act of brotherhood has done more to make the common people feel the real meaning of the national movement than hundreds of meetings and speeches ? Whoever came to calcutta on that occasion has gone back a convinced Swadeshite and will act as a missionary of the true nationalism in his or her own circle or village.

We welcome therefore every attempt to do service to our fellow countrymen by the rising generation. The prevalence of famine gives us enormous opportunities in this direction, for by saving the lives of our countrymen we shall be establishing a claim upon God. When we have learned to work for our country, God will work for us. The action of the Anusilan Samiti in attempting to organize the collection of tamine funds and the distribution of relief is of happy augury for the future, and the appointment of a Committee consisting of members of all parties shows where we can meet with the best chances of real unity. No differences of opinion can divide us here. The Samiti keeps clear of politics, but in this work it will be unconsciously doing a greater service to the political advancement of the country than those who are working directly for it.

# 10

## OLIGARCHY OR DEMOCRACY ?

SRI AUROBINDO

Apart from questions of aim and method, a fruitful source of discord between the two parties has been the divergence of views with regard to the spirit of the Congress, whether it is to be the Congress of the few or the Congress of the many. This divergence has been chiefly operative in bringing about struggles over the election of the President and his method of conducting the proceedings, over the selection of the Subjects Committee and the rights of the delegates to express their opinion and use every means to make it operative. One side demands implicit obedience to the authority of the President and a small circle of leaders, the other claims that the President is only a servant of the Congress with a delegated and limited power that the Congress is supreme and no small circle of leaders has a right to dictate to it, and that the obscurest delegate is by his very position equal in rights and status to the most distinguished men in the country. One side tries to form a Subjects Committee of the leading men in each province, the other tries to enforce the right of the delegates to make their own unhampered choice. One side wishes the Congress to register obediently the resolutions framed for it by wiser heads, the other claims a sovereign dignity and activity for the whole body and the utmost latitude of debate on all important questions. This difference of spirit has been the cause of even more discord and bitterness than the difference of aims and methods, and the most difficult and debatable points in the Congress Constitution will be

those into which this issue enters.

In the early days of the world political development was the result of the needs of the civic organism; in modern times it is powerfully swayed by ideas, and often the idea creates the need. English education has brought in the idea of democracy of the sovereign right and power of the people, and a predilection for the forms of a democratic assembly. When, therefore, the Congress was instituted, the originators tried to cast it in the democratic mould, to clothe it in democratic forms. But the idea by itself cannot become operative, it must first create a corresponding need. The Congress, therefore, while democratic in theory, was in reality a close oligarchy of the most primitive type. Claiming to realize in obedience to the most developed modern ideas the course of modern democratic development, it really followed in obedience to the actual political conditions of the country a course of primitive development very like in its essential features to the primitive constitutions of early times when democracy was unconsciously evolving. There was no electorate which could make the principle of election operative, no political vitality or habit of political thought in the people to put life into the forms of a democratic assembly, no article of opinions which could hammer out the complete mould of a great deliberative assembly from the rough and shapeless press called the Congress.

Nominally, the Congress was a sort of imitation Parliament and its delegates were supposed to be elected by the people and representatives of the people; in reality, there was no electorate to represent and the forms of election degenerated into a force; five people often meeting to elect a hundred out of whom those only attended the Congress session who had time and leisure. In effect, therefore, the Congress was not a modern Parliament but a popular assembly, like the old Aryan assemblies in which the whole body of the citizens could attend and all did attend who had the inclination and the leisure. But while the old Aryan assembly wes actually the mustering of the citizens, the Congress was rather like those early federal assemblies held in a central place in which as many as could attended from distant places and the bulk of the gathering was made up of local citizens. The peculiarity of the Congress has been the failure to provide against the preponderance of the local majority except by the habit of aiming at unanimity in its resolutions. This flaw in the foundation has been largely responsible

for the final tumbling to pieces of the structure. Nominally, again, the resolutions of the Congress were passed by the vote of the assembled delegates, as in a democratic chamber; in reality, the delegates did not vote at all but, like the primitive assemblies, simply accepted by acclamation resolutions ready prepared for them by a few influential men sitting in secret council. Nominally, the President was elected by the Congress and presided over the proceedings according to recognized rules of debate, but in reality he was chosen out of and by the small oligarchical circle which ruled the Congress, effected their decisions and carried out their will. His authority over the proceedings was unfettered by any written rules; the custom and the precedents of the Assembly were the sole guide and these were interpreted by him according to the convenience of the Congress oligarchs. Thus, the pretence of a modern democratic assembly reduced itself in practice to the reality of an oligarchy. A small circle meeting in secret called the Congress, decided its place of meeting, fixed its policy, framed its resolutions, selected its officers, governed its proceedings and took the opinion of the assembly by acclamation. The assembly listened to the speakers selected by the oligarchs and passed by acclamation the resolutions they had framed. The President was simply a temporary chief of the oligarchs and not the real head of a democratic assembly. In all these respects the Congress reproduced with extraordinary fidelity the essential features of a primitive Greek ecclesia or the Roman comitia in the most oligarchical period.

The first attempt to democratise the Congress was the creation of the Subjects Committee, as a sort of temporary Senate or Council which should prepare the business of the Congress. It was an unconscious reproduction of the Greek 'boule' or preliminary Council which had similar functions; but it failed to democratise the Congress, it only widened the basis of the Congress oligarchy. It was supposed to be elected by the assembly but was really selected by the oligarchs whose nominations were accepted by the Congress. The Subjects Committee meetings were indeed the scene of frequent encounters between the oligarchs and the free lances who represented a growing strain of popular discontent; but there was no popular party which these men could set against the prestige of the old leaders, and they themselves were usually young and ambitions men who soon passed into the charmed circle and

became its chief supports. Those of a robuster type, a Tilak or a Bipin Pal, were held at arm's length and, having no organized following, were unable to prevail.

Another direction in which the incipient democratic tendency sought to fulfil itself was in the demand for a fixed and written constitution for the Congress. Unwritten law administered by a coterie, class or caste, has always been a strength to oligrachy, and we find in early times that the first demand of infant democracy is for the codification of law and a fixed and written constitution. We have ourselves experienced in the last two years what a powerful weapon in the hands of the Congress oligarchy has been this absence of a written constitution, law and procedure for the Congress. The demand for a written constitution early manifested itself and led for some time to an actual secession of a whole Province from the Congress, but the privilege of administering the body without fixed or written restrictions was too highly valued by the official clique to be lightly parted with, and by procrastination and masterly inaction they succeeded in baffling the growing demand.

To democratise the Congress was, in fact, impossible without a popular awakening and widening of the political consciousness. Democracy is impossible without a demos, a people politically awake and active, and it was only in the unheaval of 1905 that the rediments of such a demos began to form. The Nationalist party which sprang out of that upheaval, showed its character by the democratic nature of its demands and the increasing tendency to democracy in its own composition. It demanded that the President should be elected according to popular sentiment and not by a coterie, that the Subjects Committee should be elected in due form and not nominated by a coterie, that the President and the Congress official circles should act constitutionally and not at their caprice, or that the constitution should be reduced to writing or that the full assembly of delegates should be in fact as well as in theory the sovereign body and that the rights of discussion, amendment and rejection of resolutions should be allowed to be put in practice. In brief, they claimed that the theoretically democratic Congress should become democratic in effect and reality. The keenness of the struggle not only in the Congress but outside it has been largely if not principally due to this onslaught on the charmed oligarchical circle and the determination of the

latter to preserve their position at any cost. At Midnapur, for instance, the struggle was over this issue, and not over any serious difference of opinion. And though the issue at Surat was much larger and complicated, it is significant that the battle was joined over a question of constitutional procedure, and it was on a claim of the official oligarchy to override the constitutional rights of a delegate that the Surat Congress broke up in admired disorder. Oligarchy or democracy, authority or freedom is the issue, and no settlement can work which does not decide the question whether the Congress is to remain a mute assembly swayed by a handful of men or a democratic body of as modern a development as the political conditions of the country will allow.

# 11

## FREEDOM OF SPEECH

SRI AUROBINDO

The questions in Parliament about the change of the existing law and Mr. Morley's answers seem to point to a coming repressive measure intended to suppress the small amount of free speech still existing in India. The rights of free speech and free meeting were once reckoned among the priceless blessings which British rule had brought to India. Now-a-days one can with difficulty put oneself back into the frame of mind which made such a conception possible. The entire dependence on British protection, the child-like faith in the machinery of European civilization, the inability to perceive facts or distinguish words from realities, the facile contentment with the liberties of the slave to which that conception testified, are happily growing obsolete. They persist in the survivors of the old generation and in those of the present generation who cannot open themselves to new ideas, but are dead in the minds of those who will be the future people of India. In the course of another fifty years men will look back to the times when such ideas were possible in the same spirit that the nineteecth century looked back to the Middle Ages, as a period of absolute ignorance and darkness when the national mind and consciousnsss were in a state of total eclipse. The blessings of British rule have all been weighed in the balance and found wanting. The Pax Britannica is now seen to be the cause of our loss of manliness, and power of self-defence, a peace of death and torpor, security to starve in, the ease of the grave. British law has been found to be a

fruitful source of demoralization, an engine to destroy ancient houses, beggar wealthy families and drain the poor of their little competence. British education has denationalised the educated community, laid waste the fertile soil of the Indian intellect, suppressed originality and invention, created a gulf between the classes and the masses and done its best to kill that spirituality which is the soul of India. The petty privileges which British statecraft has thrown to us as morsels from the rich repast of liberty, have pauperised us politically, preserved all that was low, weak and dependent in our political temperament and discouraged the old robust manhood of out forefathers. Every Municipal or District Board has been a nursery of dependence and pampered slavery, and the right of public meeting and freedom of the Press only served to complete this demoralization, while at the same time cheating us into the belief that we were free.

The ancient Romans had a class of slaves born in the family and pampered in their childhood by their masters who were called *vernae* and enjoyed a peculiar position of mingled license and subjection. They were allowed to speak with the most unbounded license, to abuse their masters, to play tricks sometimes of a most injurious character and were yet indulged—so long as the master was in a good humour; let the master's temper turn sour or break into passion and the lash was called into requisition. The freedom of speech enjoyed by us under the bureaucratic rule has been precisely of this kind. It depended on the will of a despotic administration, and at any moment it could be withdrawn or abridged, at any moment the lash of the law could be brought down on the back of the critic. This freedom of speech was worse than the Russian censorship; for in Russia the editor laboured under no delusion, he knew that freedom of speech was not his, and if he wrote against the administration, it was at his own risk; there was no pretence, no dissimulation on either side. But our freedom of speech has demoralized us, fostered an ignoble mixture of servility and license, of cringing and impudenee, which are the very temperament of the slave. We were extravagantly pleased with the slightest boons conceded to us and poured out our feelings with fulsome gratitude, or we grew furious at favours withheld and abused the withholders in the same key. Our public expressions were full of evasions falsehoods, flatteries of British rule coupled with venomous and damaging attacks on that which in

the same breath we lauded to the skies. A habit of cowardly insincerity became ingrained in us, which was fatal to the soundness of the heart, an insincerity which refused to be confined to our relations with the rulers and pursued us into our relations with our own countrymen. The same dry rot of insincerity vitiated all our public action and even our private lives, making a farce of our politics, a comedy of our social reform, and turning us from men into masks. The strenuous attempt to live what we believed, which was the result of the ancient Indian discipline, left the educated class altogether and a gulf was placed between our practice and our professions, so that the heart of India began to beat slower and slower and seemed likely to stop.

It was the proud privilege of the Nationalist party to strike at the root of this terrible evil. From the first outburst of the Swadeshi movement, their speakers and writers decided to be no longer masks but men, to speak and write the truth that was in their minds, the feeling that was in their hearts without disguise, withont equivocation, as freemen vindicating their freedom,—a freedom not bestowed but inborn. The poison passed out of the national system and the blood began to circulate freely in our veins. Once more we stood up as men and not as gibbering spectres of a vanished humanity. The attitude of the *Sandhya* and *Yugantar*, consistently maintained in the dock, stood for a revival of Indian sincerity, truthfulness, manliness, fearlessness; it was the resurgence of the *Arya*, the ideal of honour and quiet manhood which made our forefathers great. But when the prosecutions failed to crush the papers for which the martyrs offered themselves as a sacrifice, the cry was raised that they were being sacrificed by designing men who kept themselves in the background. The persistence of the same tone and the same writings showed that those who maintained the spirit of the paper were untouched, and it was obvious that only by putting them under lock and key, could the journal itself be sunfed out. So the threat of a change in the law which would hunt out the real culprits, has been persistently held before our eyes, and, if disregarded may be carried out. The threat is an empty one, because no change of law can find out those whom the nation is determined to save, lest the light of truth be permaturely put under eclipse. Only by the abrogation of all law, by an arbitrary measure extinguishing the freedom of speech altogether, can these journals be snuffed out of being by

the hand of Power. Such a measure may at any moment be hurried through the Legislative Council, and the fear of it troubles our Moderate friends and sometimes finds expression in objurgations against our past indiscretions or our policy of protecting our writers and contributors coupled with more or less bland invitations to commit suicide so that their journals may survive. But the existence of one paper which does not shrink from expression of the heart and mind of the nation is of a higher value than that of many journals which fill their columns with insincerities and platitudes. The freedom of speech which the Moderate party are so anxious to save from extinction is a badge of slavery, a poison to the national health, a perpetuation of servitude, and it is better that it should be extinguished than that the recovered freedom of a nation's soul should cease. God will find out a way to spread the movement; even as it was found out in Russia, if the bureaucracy are so ill-advised as to gag the Press. The voice is abroad and what law shall prevail against it ?

# 12

## NATIONALISM SO LONG TRIUMPHANT

SRI AUROBINDO

How will the Nationalist proceed to his work ? He aspires to infuse the whole nation with the spirit of his faith, communicate to every Indian his own restless yearning for a united and self-ruled India. And staring him in the face stands the Bureaucracy like the image of an inexorable Fate, bent on his complete destruction. The Indian Government has been waiting in grim patience for the auspicious hour, for the opportune moment to come when the crusade could be begun against Nationalism with the greatest chance of success. And judging by the recent acts of the Provincial Governments, one may infer that the rulers of the country consider that moment at last come. Let us look a little more closely. The appearance of the Nationalist in the arena of Indian politics was a fruitful source of trouble, uneasiness, chagrin and heart-burning to many; to the Government whose pretensions to irresponsibility he boldly questioned, to the Moderate who felt the ground being cut away from under his feet, to the flunkey and the minion who began to be loathed and shunned by their country men like poison, to the 'friends of India' in the Parliament who found it increasingly difficult to maintain the cant of a loyal and contented India, and to journals of the type of the *Statesman* which watched with dismay the main body of the people breaking away from their ideal of permanent British overlordship softening down from precedent to precedent which were to be judiciously few and very far between. In the existence of these opponents of

Nationalism other than itself, the Bureaucracy saw the best chance of crushing the newborn movement. If the various anti-nationalism interests could be conciliated and won over to the side of Absolutism in India, the Nationalist would necessarily be isolated, and then it would be easy work to put the quencher on his faith. This is the main secret of the despatch with which the scheme of so-called reforms was drawn up in india and sent to England for John Morley's blessings and approval. And now that the reforms have been burst upon an astonished world—astonished in more ways then the one in which the Bureaucracy thought to astonish it—it is not difficult to detect in every one of them the inspiration of the purpose we have referred to above. They combine with a bid for the sympathy of the landed aristocracy, an indecently showy wooing of Mahomedan allegiance and an ample appreciation of all but a traitorous loyalty on the part of an Indian member of the Imperial service, the almost complete fulfilment of the demand that Mr. Gokhale formulated in his Presidential speech from the Congress platform less than two years ago. All the people other than the Extremists are now surely satisfied. Anglo-India is thinking aloud, and now the Government must lose no time in sweeping him off the face of India, and hence the plenteous crop of prosecution and persecution that this post-Reformation period has already begun to yield. And all Anglo-India is on the tip-toe of a devouring expectation to see the corpse of the last Nationalist float down the Ganges into the sea.

We must admit the Bureaucracy has been extremely methodical in its ways and logical in its methods. Bureaucracy is always logical, only its logic like itself suffers from one serious weakness—the constant and irremediable tendency to become out of date. The logic of the situation when Mr. Gokhale spoke is very far from being applicable to the situation today. The most powerful and important class of Indians whom these very reforms would have thrown into ecstasies of gratitude two years ago, require now much more radical alterations of the constitution that the creation of a new Council, the useless expansion of old ones, and the introduction of a Hindu-Mahomedan dualism into Mr. Morley's Council Chamber, in order to be reconciled to the Anglo-Indian Absolutism. We are referring, it is needless to say, to the Moderates not excepting the Editor of the *Statesman* even, who pronounce the reforms insufficient for his limited purpose of

perpetuating in this country a benevolent British Despotism. The Bureaucracy has counted all this time without a most potent element, in fact, the most formative element in life—strength of the idea. The one idea on which the Nationalist has been dwelling with such strenuous and incessant emphasis for over two years has sunk deep down into the nation's mind. The masses and the classes have alike been permeated by it, the educated and the ignorant, he who had faith in the Congress and he who had not—every one as a fact excepting the insignificant but inevitable minority of callous, selfish, soulless men who figure in the Anglo-Indian Press under the extremely shadowy appellations of "loyalists," "natural leaders of the country" and so forth. Those who had no pronounced political views before are now eagerly ranging themselves on the Nationalism side; many, once professing a Moderate faith, have now turned Nationalists; and by far the largest majority of the professed Moderates themselves are Nationalists at heart, and only refrain from openly renouncing their political denomination under the promptings of the Shakespearean introspection "what's in a name ?"

The people—the masses—have been with the Nationalist from the very beginning of his career; they had only to be told what Nationalism meant in order to subscribe themselves his followers. The vast body of educated men whose general indifference to politics the Moderate principles had proved incapable of galvanising into a living love of the Motherland, are now hastening to the call of Nationalism; the Moderates themselves are mostly all but Nationalists. The worker in the Nationalist cause therefore has the strongest of reasons to press on the path he has so long trodden. There are only two possible dangers of which he needs beware, either any fundamental concession on the part of the Government, or the show or employment of any unregulated physical force on the part of the people. To this we shall return on another occasion.

# 13

## BUREAUCRACY AND NATIONALISM

SRI AUROBINDO

One has only to look through the columns of the *Englishman* now-a-day to realize how Anglo-India is being insensibly led by the invisible hand of Fate in the way of the world's other despotisms that are now no more. The path along which the bureaucracy is now going is full of peril, beset with hidden foes who start up all around in ever-widening circles at every step forward. Despotism depends for its existence and continuance on an undeveloped popular consciousness which is insensitive to the need for liberty. And so long as this continues, so long as a people are contented with the pursuit of life's other concerns, be they religion, wealth, learning or philanthropy, without caring for a moment as to who may carry on the work of the Government, that Government will remain either a monarchy or an aristocracy. The theory of the divine right of Kings or of the God-given right of the chosen few to rule over the many is then allowed to go unchallenged, and even gradually finds itself enshrined in the country's religion, literature and philosophy which invariably grow up at this stage of people's development in the immediate vicinity of the seat of political authority. But in the evitable course of evolution which is only materialized ethical process unfolding itself in its various phases through the different nations and races of the earth, there must come a time when a subject people awakens to a supreme sense of necessity for freedom, for the self-determination of its political problems and issues, as the only possible guarantee

of its further progress in the world. The causes that bring this about may be few or many, external or internal or both, but the conviction of "Liberty of Death" is bound to visit sometimes or other every unfree nation that has not ceased to live. And, then woe unto the monarch or the autocrat who strives to stem the tide of such national feeling.

The monarchies of Japan, China and Persia have saved themselves by their ready espousal of the cause of popular liberty. The Mikado, the Dowager-Empress and the Shah will remain permanent names in history, as the first and foremost examples of absolute rulers recognizing the sacredness and the inevitableness of popular emancipation. They are the only monarchs who have not read history in vain and have had the humanity not to demand the life of those who were ready to lay it down at the altar of liberty.

This perhaps also serves to bring out the essential difference that there always has been between Asia and Europe. No great truth or idea has been able to win its way to victory in Europe without drenching the ground behind it with the blood of its votaries. Even today after the enfranchisement of the rest of the Europe, the Russian bureaucracy refuses with a stubborn blindness to abide by the lesson of history, and is fighting its ground inch by inch with the people, gloating over the flood of blood with which the country is overflooding. In Asia, on the other hand, no religious upheaval has ever had to count its Martyrs, and it is that same age-long innate and intense humanity of her sons—King and beggar alike—that has made the bloodless installation of liberty possible in three of her great countries.

And what about India, then—Asia's most sacred land that has put on her brow the crown of immortality ? She is in the clutches of a people who have always associated the battle for liberty with the sight of the dead, with the groans of the dying and who cannot imagine a nation fit for freedom until it has braved relentless persecution and fought and killed its way to emancipation. Is it then absolutely unpreventible that India must go through the traditional blood-path before she is declared absolved of her sins and fit to enter the common shrine of humanity ? Must she re-enact the Russion tragedy ? This is the one question that presses for an adequate answer now.

We must always remember in this connexion that alien

absolutism in this country depends helplessly on the co-operation of our own people. Let that co-operation be withdrawn and bureaucratic absolutism tumbles in like a house of cards. A very old discovery this, but it is only now that India seems to be within a measurable distance of actively grasping its significance. And it is this necessity of indigenous help and support on the part of the bureaucracy that renders a bloodless passage to liberty in India perhaps possible. If every Indian were filled with a passionate intolerance of arbitrary rule in his country, then absolutism could be brought to the dust in a day. In any case this possibility must be thoroughly exploited and exhausted before the preacher of the ideal of liberty can have reason to confess its failure. Let him who can speak and him who can write bring this message incessantly to his countrymen.

It is because the bureaucracy has scented danger in the strenuous preaching of the gospel of liberty, that it has entered upon its policy of repression and deceptive reform. And the results that have followed are rich with promise. The bureaucracy seems to be always in the wrong; if it is let alone, the work of the Nationalist proceeds by leaps and bounds; if it tries to hamper speech and writing, it brings into birth a responsive energy that wells up above and beyond the reach of its repressive powers. The work of familiarising the nation with the need for liberty, therefore, bids fair to go on inspite of all that the bureaucracy has yet been able to do; in fact; it seems to have advanced more quickly and extensively since the initiation of the regime of repression.

The secret of it lies in the fact, as we have so often said, that the mind of the people has long been in a state of preparation for liberty; what the Nationalist preacher tells them, articulates a latent longing of their hearts; and it is therefore, that every act of bureaucratic persecution wins for us thousands of hearts, and people willingly listen in increasing numbers to the message of liberty as the message of their salvation. And if the bureaucracy only remains true to its work of persecuting those who insist on the primary importance of freedom, there will soon be only two parties in the country, the people with their persecuted leaders *vs.* the bureaucrats with their thirty thousand civil servants and seventy thousand soldiers and we almost forgot the handful of signatories to the loyalist manifesto.

As we have said at the beginning, the bureaucracy is on a fair way towards the situation. We learn from the *Englishman* that officialdom is finding itself unable to collect evidence against those who are brought up for trial in Swadeshi cases. Does not this one fact justify the hope that the day is fast coming when the Government will be met by the refusal of every Indian to associate himself with it in every act of Anti-Swadeshism ? The *Englishman* of Saturday simply bristles with similar other news of the bureaucracy's acts and intentions whose one inevitable effect can only be the furtherance of dissociation between itself and the people. And those who have taken note of the extreme rapidity with which the situation has been developing day by day, will not be surprised to find the line of cleavage appearing definitely within a very short time—the cleavage between the bureaucracy on one side and the people on the other.

# 14

## SPIRITUALITY AND NATIONALISM

SRI AUROBINDO

Mankind has a natural inclination to hero-worship and the great men who have done wonders for human civilization will always be the inspiration of future ages. We are Hindus and naturally spiritual in our temperament, because the work which we have to do for humanity is a work which no other nation can accomplish, the spiritualisation of the race; so the men whom we worship are those who have helped the spiritual progress of mankind. Without being sceptical no spiritual progress is possible, for blind adoration is only the first stage in the spiritual development of the soul. We are wont to be spiritually sceptical, to hesitate to acknowledge to overselves anything we have not actually experienced by the process of silent communion with God, so that the great sages of antiquity were as sceptical as any modern rationalist. They did away with all preconceived notions drawn from the religion of the Vedas, plunged into the void of absolute scepticism and tried to find there the Truth. They doubted everything, the evidence of the senses, the reality of the world, the reality of their own existence, and even the reality of God. This scepticism reached its culmination in the teachings of Buddha, who would admit nothing, presuppose nothing, declare nothing dogmatically, and insisted only on self-discipline, self-communion, self-realization as the only way to escape from the entanglement of the intellect and the senses. When scepticism had reached its height, the time had come for spirituality to assert itself and

establish the reality of the world as a manifestation of the spirit, the secret of the confusion created by the senses the magnificent possibilities of man and the ineffable beautitude of God. This is the work whose consummation Sri Ramkrishna came to begin and all the development of the previous two thousand years and more since Buddha appeared, has been a preparation for the harmonization of spiritual teaching and experience by the *avatar* of Dakshineswar.

The long ages of discipline which India underwent, are now drawing to an end. A great light is drawing on the East, a light whose first heralding glimpses are already seen on the horizon; a new day is about to break, so glorious that even the last of the *avatars* cannot be sufficient to explain it, although without him it would not have come. The perfect expression of Hindu spirituality was the signal for the resurgence of the East. Mankind has long been experimenting with various kinds of thought, different principles of ethics, strange dreams of a perfection to be gained by material means, impossible millenniums and humanitarian hopes. Nowhere has it succeeded in realizing the ultimate secret of life. Nowhere has society or politics helped it to escape from the necessity of sorrow, poverty, strife, dissatisfaction from which it strives for an outlet; for whoever it trying to find one by material means, must inevitably fail. The East alone has some knowledge of the truth, the East alone can teach the West, the East alone can save mankind. Through all these ages Asia has been seeking for a light within, and whenever she has been blessed with a glimpse of what she seeks, a great religion has been born, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Mahomedanism with all their countless sects. But the grand workshop of spiritual experiment, the laboratory of the soul has been India, where thousands of great spirits have been born in every generation who were content to work quietly in their own souls, perfect their knowledge, hand down the results of their experiments to a few disciples and leave the next to others to complete. They did not hasten to proselytise, were in no way eager to proclaim themselves, but merely added their quota of experience and returned to the source from which they had come. The immense reservoir of spiritual energy stored up by the self-repression was the condition of this birth of *avatars*, of men so full of God that they could not be satisfied with silent bliss, but poured it out on the world, not with the idea of proselytising but because

they wished to communicate their own ecstasy of realization to others who were fit to receive it either by previous *tapasya* or by the purity of their desires. Of all these souls Sri Ramkrishna was the last and greatest, for while others felt God in a single or limited aspect, he felt Him in His illimitable unity as the sum of an illimitable variety. In him the spiritual experiences of the millions of saints who had gone before were renewed and united. Sri Ramkrishna gave to India the final message of Hinduism to the world. A new era dates from his birth, and era in which the peoples of the earth will be lifted for a while into communion with God and spirituality become the dominant note of spiritual life. What Christianity failed to do, what Mahomedanism strove to accomplish in times as yet unripe, what Buddhism half accomplished for a brief period and among a limited number of men, Hinduism as summed up in the life of Sri Ramkrishna has to attempt for all the world. This is the reason of India's resurgence, this is why God has breathed life into her once more, why great souls are at work to bring about her salvation, why a sudden change is coming over the hearts of her sons. The movement of which the first outbreak was political, will end in a spiritual consummation.

# 15

## WELCOME TO THE PROPHET OF NATIONALISM*

SRI AUROBINDO

Today Srijut Bipin Chandra Pal is due in Calcutta, a free man once more until it shall please irresponsible Magistrates and easily-twisted laws to repeat his seclusion from the work which God has given him to do. A true leader of men today in India holds his liberty as a light thing to be lost at a moment's notice; when he chooses to defend himself, he does so with the knowledge that no skill of defence but the choice of his prosecutors is the arbiter of the trial, no soundness of the law in his favour, but the convenience of those who employ and pay his judge, determines whether he goes free or incurs the honourable pains of martyrdom —brief or long according to the caprice or policy of his political adversaries. To one who loves his country above all things, life in India today is as insecure as in the worst days of despotic caprice and arbitrariness from which British benevolence is fabled to have rescued us; he walks about under the constant sense of an insecurity which is the condition of his labours, not knowing whether the next day will not see him under arrest with lhe practical certainty of a sentence already fixed and awaiting only the idle formalities

*The article was written on the occasion of Bipin Chandra Pal's release from the Buxar Jail, after six months' simple imprisonment, on March 9, 1908 and his expected arrival in Calcutta on the following evening. He suffered imprisonment under contempt of court in connection with the *Bande Mataram* prosecution.

of a nominal trial for its confirmation. The price of safety, if he desires it, is the sacrifice of his soul, to be silent when God has bidden him to speak, to refrain from action which his duty and conscience call on him to perform. Bureaucracy sometimes promises him safety for the moment at an apparently lighter price, the loss of personal self-respect and honour. It does not, as it once did, call upon him to fall down and worship it, it does not demand affection from its opponents; but it is content to barter acquittal for an apology. Recantation was the alternative which the old persecutors of Christianity and the Christian persecutors of Jews and heretics offered to those whom they threatened with the cross and the arena, with the rack and the fire, and it was offered for the same reason that it is offered today to the political martyr. The force with which the old religious persecutors had to struggle was a moral force which fought tyranny not with material weapons but with the weapons of the spirit and it was by intimidating the spirit and breaking of moral force of the resistance that they hoped to destory the movement which they feared.

Recantation meant a diminution of the moral force of the movement, so much to the credit of the tyrant, to the loss of the cause. Today also it is a great religious movement disguised for the moment in a political and Western garb with which the bureaucracy is faced and the weapons which it uses are the weapons of the spirit, the force which makes it formidable is a spiritual force. We have nothing to oppose to the immense material engines of the bureaucracy except the exalted faith, the unflinching courage, the unswerving devotion to principle which has been so strangely, suddenly born in the hearts of this generation of young men in Bengal. There lies the true strength of Nationalism and the enemies of Nationalism instinctively feel it. They are concerned therefore not so much to crush the inadequate and rudimentary material means which the movement has so far generated but to destroy the moral force which makes it a power. They are willing to forego the satisfaction of vindictiveness, if they can secure the solid advantage of an apology on recantation of some kind such as would fatally injure the moral force of at least one champion of Nationalism and by cumulative examples beat down the enthusiastic self-confidence of the nation. Once or twice they have succeeded, but these solitary instances of weakness have been a beacon-light of warning to the country and the stern resolution not

to flinch has been strengthened by the perception of the incalculable harm a single instance of recantation can do to the whole cause. On the other hand, every one who can say to the bureaucratic tempter, "Get thee behind me, Satan", is scoring a victory for the cause of his country.

Yet, there are signs that the counsels of prudence and the wisdom of the diplomat are beginning to gain upon us, we are growing wise in our generation and calculate the harm that can be done to the success of the movement by rashness or the advantages to be gained by a little care and economy of life or suffering. The exaltation of the movement is in danger of being lowered by an accommodating spirit. We have referred before to this growing danger and we are led to dwell on it by a perception of the relaxation in popular enthusiasm and fire which is apparent in Bengal. Now that Bipin Chandra is coming out of prison, we look to his triumphant oratory, the Pythian inspiration of his matchless eloquence to reawaken the spirit of lofty idealism, of unflinching devotion to principle which it was his mission to confirm if not awaken, and which is now more evident in Madras, where his influence is the chief inspiring force, than is Bengal, the home of Nationalism. The voice of the prophet will once more be free to speak to our hearts, the voice through which God has more than once spoken. We shall remember once more that the movement is a spiritual movement for prophets, martyrs and heroes to inspire, help and lead, not for diplomats and pinchbeck Machiavels; we shall realize that the spirit of India reawakened is the life of the movement and not a borrowed Western patriotism; we shall shrink once more from accommodation and paltering with the high call of our conscience as a fatal concession to the adversary and feel again that only by perfect faith, perfect self-sacrifice, perfect courage can we generate that *Brahmatej* in the nation which will raise up the Kshatriya spirit to protect it. Without this *Brahmatej*, this spiritual force in our midst, all else will be vain; Swadeshi will cease, National Education ail, the great hopes and schemes now forming in our midst disappear like idle wreaths of smoke and the whole movement stain the pages of history as an abortive and premature impulse, a great chance of freedom lost because the body of the nation was not strong enough and the soul of the nation was not pure enough to sustain the tremendous inrush of spiritual force which had suddenly come upon it. Bipin Chandra

stands before India as the exponent of the spiritual force of the movement, its pure 'Indianity', its high devotion to principle; this has been the kernel of his teaching, the secret of the almost miraculous force which often breathed from his eloquence. To give this message was the work particularly chosen for him. We need that message to be repeated in yet mightier language and with more convincing logic; the voice has been too long silent, the word of inspiration wanting. We welcome back today not Bipin Chandra Pal, but the speaker of a God-given message; not the man but the voice of the Gospel of Nationalism. He comes to us purified by an act of self-immolation, with a soul deepened by long hours of solitude and self-communion to repeat the word of hope and inspiration, to call us once more to the task of national self-realization. Welcome to him and thrice welcome.

# 16

## THE NEW IDEAL

SRI AUROBINDO

The need of a great ideal was never more keenly felt than it is in India at the present day. Nowhere have so many weaknesses combined to stand in the way of a nation in the whole range of history. Nowhere have the rulers reduced their subjects to so complete, pervading and abject a material helplessness. When the Moghul ruled, he ruled as a soldier and a conqueror, in the pride of his strength, in the confidence of his invincible greatness, as the lord of the peoples by natural right of his imperial character and warlike strength and skill. He stopped to no meanness, hedged himself in with no army of spies, entered into no relations with foreign powers, but, grandiose and triumphant, sat on the throne of a continent like Indra on his heavenly seat, master of his world because there was none strong enough to dispute it with him. He trusted his subjects, gave them positions of power and responsibility, used their brain and arm to preserve his conquests and by the royalty of that trust and noble pride in his own ability to stand by his innate strength, was able to hold India for over a century until Aurangzeb forgot the *Kuladharma* of his house and by distrust, tyranny and meanness lost for his descendants the splendid heritage of his forefathers. The present domination is a rule of shop-keepers who are at the same time bureaucrats, a combination of the worst possible qualities for imperial Government. The shop-keeper rules by deceit, the bureaucrat by the use of red tape. The shop-keeper by melancholy meanness alienates the subject

population, the bureaucrat by soulless rigidity deprives the administration of life and human sympathy. The shop-keeper uses his position of authority to push his wares and fleece his subjects, the bureaucrat forgets his duty and loses his royal character in his mercantile greed. The shop-keeper becomes a pocket Machiavel, the bureaucrat a gigantic retail trader. By this confusion of *dharmas*, *varnashankara* is born in high places and the nation first and the rulers afterward go to perdition. This is what has happened in India under the present regime. The bureaucracy has ruled in the spirit of a mercantile power, holding its position by aid of mercenaries, afraid of its subjects, with no confidence in its destiny, with no trust even in the mercenaries who support it, piling up gold with one hand, with the other holding a borrowed sword over the head of a fallen people. It has sought its strength not in the mission with which God had entrusted it, nor in the greatness of England, her mastery of the ocean, her pride of unconquered prowess, her just and sympathetic principle of government, but in the weakness of the people. The strength of England has been held as a threat in the background, not as a source of quiet and unostentatious self-confidence which enable the rulers to be generous as well as just. The liberal principles of English rule have been chanted as a sort of magic *mantra* to hypnotise the nation into willing subjection, not used as a living principle of government. What have been the real sources of bureaucratic strength ? An Arms Act, a corrupt and oppressive police, an army of spies, a mercenary military force officered by Englishmen, a people emasculated, kept ignorant out of the world's life, poor, intimidated, abjectly under the thumb of the police constable or the provincial prefect. Such a principle of rule cannot endure. It contradicts the law of God and offends the reason of man; it is as unprofitable as it is selfish and heartless.

The nation which has passed through a century of such a misgovernment must necessarily have degenerated. The bureaucracy has taken care to destroy every centre of strength not subservient to itself. A nation politically disorganized, a nation morally corrupted, intellectually pauperised, physically broken and stunted, is the result of a hundred years of British rule, the account which England can give before God of the trust which He placed in her hands. The condition of the people is the one answer to all the songs of praise which the bureaucrats sing of their rule, which

the people of England charms with such a smug self-satisfaction and which even foreign people echo in the tune of admiration and praise. But for as the people who have suffered, the victims of the miserable misuse which bureaucrats have made of the noblest opportunity, God ever gave to a nation, the song has no longer any charm, the *mantra* has lost its hypnotic force, the spell has ceased to work. While we could we deceived ourselves, but we can deceive ourselves no longer. Pain is a terrible disillusioner and the pangs which had come upon us were those of approaching dissolution. It was at the last moment, when further delay would have meant death, that a higher than earthly physician administered through a proud Viceroy the potent prison of Partition and saved the life of India. The treatment of the disease has been drastic and will continue to be drastic. There are those who dream of mild remedies, whose beautiful souls will not bear to think of the fierceness of strife, hatred or agony which a revolution implies; but strong poisons are the only salvation in desperate diseases and we fear that without these poisons India will not easily or ever recover from the fatal and consuming disease which has overtaken her. What will support her under the stress of the agony she will have to undergo ? What strength will help her to shake off the weaknesses which have crowded in on her ? How will she raise herself from the dark whom a thousand shackles bind down ? Only the strength of a superhuman ideal, only the gigantic force of a superhuman will, only the vehemence of an effort which transcends all this man has done and approaches divinity. Where will she find that strength, that force, that vehemence ? In herself. We have seen Ramamurti, the modern Bhimasen, lie motionless, resistant with a superhuman force of will power acting through the muscles, while two carts loaded with men are driven over his body. India must undergo an ordeal of passive endurance far more terrible without relaxing a single fibre of her frame. We have seen Ramamurti break over his chest a strong iron chain tightened round his whole body and break it by the sheer force of will working through the body. India must work a similar deliverance for herself by the same inner force. It is not by strength of body that Ramamurti accomplishes his feats, for he is not stronger than many athletes who could never do what he does daily, but by faith and will. India has in herself a faith of superhuman virtue to accomplish miracles, to deliver out of irrefragable boundage, to

bring God down upon earth. She has a secret of will power which no other nation possesses. All the needs to rouse in her that faith, that will, is an ideal which will induce her to make the effect. That ideal is now being reached by Srijut Bipin Chandra Pal in every speech he delivers and never has it been delivered with such beauty of expression, such a passion of earnestness and pathos, such a sublimity of feeling as at Uttarpara on Sunday when he addressed a meeting of the people in the compound of the Uttarpara Library. The ideal is that of humanity in God, of God in humanity, the ancient ideal of the *sanatana dharma* but applied, as it has never been applied before, to the problem of politics and the work of national revival. To realize that ideal, to impart it to the world is the mission of India. She has evolved a religion which embraces all that the heart, the brain, the practical faculty of man can desire but she has not yet applied it to the problems of modern politics. This therefore is the work which she has still to do before she can help humanity; the necessity of this mission is the justification for her resurgence, the great incentive of saving herself to save mankind is the native power which will give her the force; the strength, the vehemence which can alone enable her to realize her destiny. No lesser ideal will help her through the stress of the terrible ordeal which she will in a few years be called to face. No hope less pure will save her from the demoralisation which follows revolutionaty strife, the growth of passions, a violent selfishness, sanguinary hatred, insufferable license, the disruption of moralities, the resurgence of the tiger in man, which a great revolution is apt to foster. Srijut Bipin Chandra speaks under an inspiration which he himself is unable to resist. The public wish to hear him on Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education—the old subjects of his unparalleled—eloquence, and he himself may desire to speak on them, but the voice of a prophet is not his own to speak the thing he will, but another's to speak the thing he must. India needed the gospel of Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education to nerve her to her first effort, but now that she is drawing nearer to the valley of the shadow of Death, she needs a still mightier inspiration, a still more enthusiastic and all-conquering faith. The people have not yet understood, but the power to understand is in them, and if any voice can awake that power, it is Bipin Chandra's.

# 17

## THE ASIATIC ROLE

SRI AUROBINDO

The genius of the Hindu is not for pure action, but for thought and aspiration realized in action, the spirit premeditating before the body obeys the inward command. The life of the Hindu is inward and his outward life aims only at reproducing the motions of his spirit. This intimate relation of his thought and his actions is the secret of his perpetual vitality. His outward life, like that of other nations, is subject to growth and decay, to periods of greatness and periods of decline, but while other nations have a limit and a term, he has none. Whenever death claims his portion, the Hindu race takes refuge in the source of all immortality, plunges itself into the fountain of spirit and comes out renewed for a fresh term of existence. The elixir or national life has been discoveıed by India alone. This immortality, this great secret of life, she has treasured up for thousands of years, until the world was fit to receive it. The time has now come for her to impart it to the other nations, who are now on the verge of decadence and death. The peoples of Europe have carried material life of its farthest expression, the science of bodily existence has been prefected, but they are suffering from diseases which their science is powerless to care. England with her practical intelligence, France with her clear legical brain, Germany with her speculative genius, Russia with her emotional force, America with her commercial energy have done what they could for human development, but each has reached the limit of her peculiar capacity.

Something is wanting which Europe cannot supply. It is at this juncture that Asia has awakened, because the world needed her. Asia is the custodian of the world's peace of mind, the physician of the maladies which Europe generates. She is commissioned to rise from time to time from her ages of self-communion, self-sufficiency, self-absorption and rule the world for a season so that the world may come and sit at her feet to learn the secrets she alone has to give. When the restless spirit of Europe has added a new phase of discovery to the evolution of the science of material life, has regulated politics, rebased society, remodelled law, radiscovered science, the spirit of Asia, calm, contemplative, self-possessed, takes possession of Europe's discovery and corrects its exaggerations, its oberrations by the intention, the spiritual light she alone can turn upon the world. When the Greek and Roman had exhausted themselves, the Arab went out from his desert to take up their unfinished task, revivify the civilization of the old world and impart the profounder impulses of Asia to the pursuit of knowledge. Asia has always initiated, Europe completed. The strength of Europe is in details, the strength of Asia in synthesis. When Europe has perfected the details of life or thought, she is unable to harmonize them into a perfect symphony and she falls into intellectual heresies, practical extravagances which contradict the facts of life, the limits of human nature and the ultimate truths of existence. It is therefore the office of Asia to take up the work of human evolution when Europe comes to a standstill and loses itself in a clash of vain speculations, barren experiments and helpless struggles to escape from the consequences of her own mistakes. Such a time has now come in the world's history.

In former ages, India was a sort of hermitage of thought and peace apart from the world. Separated from the rest of humanity by her peculiar geographical conformation, she worked out her own problems and thought out the secrets of existence as in a quiet *asram* from which the noise of the world was shut out. Her thoughts flashed out over Asia and created civilizations, her sons were the bearers of light to the peoples; philosophies based themselves on stray fragments of her infinite wisdom; sciences arose from the waste of her intellectual production. When the barrier was broken and nations began to surge through the Himalayan gates, the peace of India departed. She passed through centuries of struggle, of ferment in which the civilizations, born of her

random thoughts, returned to her developed and insistent, seeking to impose themselves on the mighty mother of them all. To her they were the reminiscences of her old intellectual experiments laid aside and forgotten. She took them up, re-thought them in a new light and once more made them part of herself. So she dealt with thc Greek, so with the Scythian, so with Islam, so now she will deal with the great brood of her returning children, with Christianity, with Buddhism, with European science and materialism, with the fresh speculations born of the world's renewed contract with the source of thought in this ancient cradle of religion, science and philosophy. The vast amount of new matter which she has to absorb, is unprecedented in her history, but to her it is child's play. Her all-embracing intellect, her penetrating intuition, her invisible criginality are equal to greater tasks. The period of passivity when she listened to the voices of the outside world is over. No longer will she be content merely to receive and reproduce, even to receive and improve. The genius of Japan lies in imitation and improvement, that of India in origination. The contributions of outside peoples she can only accept as rough material for her immense creative faculty. It was the mission of England to bring this rough material to India, but in the arrogance of her material success she presumed to take upon herself the *role* of a teacher and treated the Indian people partly as an infant to be instructed, partly as a serf to be schooled to labour for its lords. The farce is played out. England's mission in India is over and it is time for her to recognize the limit of the lease given to her. When it was God's will that she should possess India, the world was amazed at the miraculous ease of the conquest and gave all the credit to the unparalleled genius and virtues of the English people, a fiction which England was not slow to encourage and on which she has traded for over a century. The real truth is suggested in the famous saying that England conquered India in a fit of absence of mind, which is only another way of saying that she did not conquer it at all. It was placed in her hands without her realizing what was being done or how it was being done. The necessary conditions were created for her, her path made easy, the instruments given into her hands. The men who worked for her were of comparatively small intellectual stature and, with few exceptions, did not make and could not have made any mark in European history where no special Providence was at work to

supplement the deficiencies of the instruments. The subjugation of India is explicable neither in the ability of the men whose names figure as the protagonists nor in the superior genius of the conquering nation nor in the weakness of the conquered people. It is one of the standing miracles of history. In other words, it was one of those cases in which a particular mission was assigned to a people not otherwise superior to the rest of the world and a special *foustitas* or decreed good fortune set to watch over the fulfilment of the mission. Her mission once over, the angel of the Lord who stood by England in her task and removed opponents and difficulties with the waving of his hand, will no longer shield her. She will stay so long as the destinies of India need her and not a day longer, for it is not by her own strength that she came or is still here, and it is not by her own strength that she can remain. The resurgence of India is begun, it will accomplish itself with her help if she will, withont it if she does not, against it if she opposes.

# 18

## POLITICS AND SPIRITUALITY

SRI AUROBINDO

The question has once more been brought before the public whether a politically dead people can retain their spirituality. Some so-called expounders of Hindu philosophy and religious thought seem to have a positive aversion to politics and disguise their total lack of spiritual culture by a vague denunciation of politics as an expression of material life. It is a common device to support one's pretensions to spirituality by speaking contemptuously of the material life. One who is of opinion that Hindu philosophy has enjoined such maudlin hatred for matter, must have studied it very badly. The drift of its teaching is not to ignore matter but to inculcate that there is something superior to matter and true happiness consists in making matter subservient to this superior element. Those who feel the quickening impulse of awakened spirit in them cannot talk in that language of an imperfect human being, as a certain religious preacher is said to have done at a Madras meeting. His utterances would have hardly attracted our attention had they not embodied a common superstition, and given a handle to Anglo-Indian publicists. Whoever distinguishes himself by a sojourn in Europe or America, and succeeds in getting himself talked of for the time being, by using some catchwords of Hindu philosophy amongst audiences of politically superior races, is supposed to be competent to make any pronouncement on Hindu philosophy and religion. If political superiority is a matter of minor importance, why do these

prophets shun their own country and try to make some noise amongst people whose politically advantageous position fills them with some pride as the conqueror of conquerors. It is idle to feign that we can even think of regaining our spiritual greatness without re-establishing our normal political relation with the other advanced peoples of the world. In fact, the true aim of the Nationalist movement is to restore the spiritual greatness of the nation by the essential preliminary of its political regeneration. Why is it that the descendants of the ancient Aryans are showing such unmistakable signs of spiritual decadance in the present times ? It is simply because they are dominated by a people the glamour of whose material civilization has made them giddy. Besides, a politically subservient people have very little scope for the exercise of their moral and spiritual energies. The bare struggle for existence becomes so acute for them that the demands of the flesh come to engross all their attention, and put an end to their activities in other direction. Subjection makes a people wholly *tamasik*, a sort of physical, intellectual and moral palsy seizes them and keeps them down to a low level of being, they are like insects grovelling in the dust and before they can be lifted up to the higher plane, they must pass through *raja*. It is now the fashion to associate cowardice with spirituality. How many of these socalled *Sannyasis*, who air their opinions about Hindu religion, are acquainted with the fact that when Sri Chaitanya was forbidden by the Mahomedan *Kazi* to lead his grand *Sankaritan* party in the public streets, he asked his followers to organize a larger and stronger party capable of offering resistance if needed and with himself at its head marched to the *Kazi's* house on the very morning from which the executive order was to be enforced. The Mahomedan magistrate was so much intimidated by the courage and spiritual fervour of Sri Gouranga that he immediately cancelled his order and himself took part in the *Sankirtan* of the evening.

It has long been the fashion with our wise and literate countrymen to affect a sort of philosophical hatred for all strife and courageous resistance as vulgar, irreligious and immoral. They seem to be under the impression that denunciation of these necessary human activities is a sign of enlightenment and elevation, and what is still more ridiculous is that they do not countenance them in political conflicts where the quarrel clusters

# 19

## RELIGION AND POLITICS

SRI AUROBINDO

The watchdogs of bureaucracy are busy making discoveries. They have lately found out that some religious missions in India are developing political tendencies. We are not much concerned with the truth of this assertion. But if religious missions turn to politics, we can only say that they do the right thing. Spiritual India never shared Dr. Johnson's vulgar view of politics nor does democratic Europe share it. The anglo-Indian Press does not seem to in the hands of cultured people or they would have least heard that Christianity has done much to advance the cause of democracy since the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine. According to Macaulay, Christianity is only a scheme of good Government. But leaving aside the possible relation of Christianity and politics, in India, the land of all sorts of rational doctrines about religion, to talk of religion and politics as two unconnected departments of human affairs provokes laughter. Here everything that claims popular attention must have the sanction of religion. Neither does religion concern any other subject so intimately as politics. Here the chief duty of the king was to ensure for the spiritual class the safety of their religious pursuits. The king was the custodian of the spiritual wealth of the country. And if under the conviction that spiritual advancement is impossible without political freedom, our religious missions vary their activities a little, they should be congratulated on their wisdom. According to Hindu Philosophy, self-knowledge and self-realisation are the

end of all religions. It is difficult to see how that greatest aim of human existence can be fulfilled, if influences from outside disorganise us and stifle our growth. We have said on a previous occasion that Mill and Sidgwick hold the political exansion of Britain to be essentially a spiritual expansion. If that is the justification of England's dominion over other lands, why should our religious missionaries be condemned for effecting the political emancipation of the country as the one essential for ensuring our spiritual ascendancy ? If it is cause for legitimate pride to every Indian that his ancestors achieved the greatest spiritual development of all nations on this earth, why should it not be equally legitimate for him to rescue that development from the conditions which have done so much to destroy it and prevent its recovery ? It cannot be for a moment contended that we can again be spiritually great without being politically dominant. The Indian of today is not the noble, heroic and self-sacrificing Indian of a bygone age, only because with the loss of political freedom his soul has also begun to pine and wither. He cannot adjust the physical environments in a manner favourable to the expansion of his soul; he cannot avail himself of the opportunities that can bring forth its latent energy; he has no larger life, no wider view of things; he has never learned to identify his interest with the interests of a nation, he is deprived of an essential means of assimilating himself to the universal. No artificial or ceremonial ways of preparing the soul can approach in effectiveness the spiritual process of merging one's hopes, desires, and one's very life in a wider individuality such as that of one's nation. The very foundation of the Gita is Sri Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna to forget his petty affections for a greater good. No human scheme of spiritual amelioration can be effective without the liberal and public-spirited activity of a free citizen. In his well-ordered life he is not only to think of himself and his family, but also of his country and countrymen. He has to bestow his attention also on international questions and thus identify himself with humanity. That a subject people are precluded from taking any part in all deliberations calculated to advance the interest of humanity, has been evidenced in the rebuff that Korea has suffered in trying to join the Hague Conference. All the free Powers of Europe have ridiculed their ambition in this respect. A politically dead nation is a cipher. Those who allow others to take possession of their

body, cannot long remain in possession of their soul. Spirit may be superior to body, but they are so intimately connected that the supremacy of one cannot be maintained by surrendering the other. Those who want initiation in spiritual secrets, are first asked to take care of their physical health. The preservation of the body in a sound condition is the first requisite for all spiritual advancement. It is a vain philosophy that seeks to set a gulf between the spirit and body. It is necessary to realise the interdependence of the two. The recognition of one to the exclusion of the other is delusion and partial knowledge according to Shankar's interpretation of Vedanta. It is by leaving aside all considerations of the body that we have come to grief.

There cannot be a more mischievous delusion than to suppose that we can advance our soul by committing our bodies to the care of the foreigners. The privations that they must necessarily cause to our bodies, the economic disturbance that they will produce in the country will not leave us free to pursue unmolested our spiritual advancement. Foreign domination is making this daily evident, the truth is being brought home to every section by the logic of facts, and our religious missions will do well if they include politics within the scope of their duty. These are the signals of the time.

# 20

## THE LIFE OF NATIONALISM

Sri Aurobindo

For all great movements, for all ideas that have a destiny before them, there are four seasons of life-development. There is first a season of secret or quasi-secret growth when the world knows nothing of this momentous birth which time has engendered, when the peoples of the earth persist in the old order of things with the settled conviction that that order has yet many centuries of life before it, when Krishna is growing from infancy to youth in Gokul among the obscure and the despised and the weak ones of the earth and Kansa knows not his enemy and, however he may be troubled by vague apprehensions and old prophecies and new presentiments, yet on the whole comforts himself with the thought of his great and invincible power and his mighty allies and by long impunity has almost come to think himself immortal. Then there comes the leaping of the great name to light, the sudden coming from Gokul to Mathura, the amazement, alarm and fury of the doomed powers and greatnesses, the delight of the oppressed who waited for a deliverer, the guile and violence of the tyrant and his frantic attempts to reverse the decrees of Fate and slay the young deity,—as if that godhead could pass from the world with its work undone. This is the second period, of emergence, of the struggle of the idea to live, of furious persecution, of miraculous persistence and survival, when the old world looks with alarm and horror on this new and portentous force, and in the midst of wild worship and enthusiasm,

of fierce hatred and frantic persecution, of bitter denunciation and angry disparagement, assisted by its friends, still better assisted by its foes, the new idea, fed with the blood of its children, thriving on torture, magnified by martyrdom, aggrandized by defeat, increases and lifts its head higher and higher into the heavens and spreads its arms wider and wider to embrace the earth until the world is full of its indomitable presence and loud with the clamour of its million voices and powers and dominations are crushed between its fingers or hasten to make peace and composition with it that they may be allowed to live. That is its third period, the season of triumph, when the tyrant meets face to face the man of his own blood and sprung from seed of his own fostering who is to destory him, and in the moment when he thinks to slay his enemy feels the grasp of the avenger on his hair and the sword of doom in his heart. Last is the season of rule and fulfilment, the life of Krishna at Dwaraca, when the victorious idea lives out its potent and unhindered existence, works its will with a world which has become in its hands as clay in the hands of the potter, creates what it has to create, teaches what it has to teach, until its own time comes and which the arrow of Age, the hunter, in its heel it gives up its body and returns to the great source of all power and energy from which it came.

But in its second period, the season of ordeal and persecution, only the children of grace for whom the gospel is preached, are able to see that vision of its glory. The world admires and hates and doubts, but will not believe. The enemies of the idea have sworn to give it short shrift. They promulgate an ordinance to the effect that it shall not dare to live, and pass a law that it shall be dumb on pain of imprisonment and death, and add a byelaw that whoever has power and authority in any part of the land shall seek out the first-born and the young children of the idea and put them to the sword. As in the early days of the Christian Church, so always zealous persecutors carry on an inquisition in house and school and market to know who favour the near doctrine; they "breathe out threatenings and slaughters against the disciples of the Lord" and make havoc of the Church entering into every house and hailing men and women, commit them to prison." The instruments of death are furbished up the rack and thumbscrew and old engines of torture which had been rusting in the lumber-room of the past are brought out, and the gallows is

made ready and the scaffold raised. Even of the nation to which the gospel is preached, the rich men and the high-priests and pandits and people of weight and authority receive is doctrine with anger, fear and contempt;—anger, because it threatens their position of comfortable authority amongst men; fear, because they see it grow with an inexplicable portentous rapidity and know that its advent means a time of upheaval, turmoil and bloodshed very disturbing to the digestions, property and peace of mind of the wealthy and "enlightened few;" contempt, because its enthusiasms are unintelligible to their wordly wisdom, its gigantic promises incredible to their cautious repticism and its inspired teachings an offence and scandal to their narrow systems of expediency and pedantic wisdom of the schools. They condemn it, therefore, as a violent and pernicious madness, belittle it as a troublesome but insignificant sect, get their learned men to argue it or their jesters to ridicule it out of existence, or even accuse its apostles before the tribunal of alien rulers, Pontius Pilate, a Felix or a Festus, as "pestilent follows and movers of sedition throughout the nation". But inspite of all and largely because of all the persecution, denunciation and disparagement, the idea gathers strength and increases; there are strange and great conversions, baptisms of whole multitudes and eager embracings of martyrdom, and the reasonings of the wise and learned are no more heeded and the prisons of the under overflow to no purpose and the gallows bears its ghastly burden fruitlessly and the sword of the powerful drips blood in brain. For the idea is God's deputy, and life and death, victory and defeat, joy and suffering have become its servants and cannot help ministering to its divine purpose.

The idea of Indian Nationalism is in the second season of its life history. The Moderate legend of its origin is that it was the child of Lord Curzon begotten upon despair and brought safely to birth by the skilful mid-wifery of Sri Bampfylde. Nationalism was never a gospel of despair nor did it owe its birth to oppression. It is no true account of it to say that because Lord Curzon favoured reaction, a section of the Congress party lost faith in England and turned Extremist, and it is vain political trickery to tell the bureaucrats in their Councils that it was their frown which created Extremism and the renewal of their smiles will kill it. The fixed illusion of these Moderate gospellers is that the national life of India is merely a fluid mirror reflecting the moods of the

bureaucracy, sunny and serene when they are in a good humour and stormy and troubled when they are out of temper, that it can have no independent existence, no self-determined character of its own which the favour of the bureaucracy cannot influence and its anger cannot disturb. But Nationalism was not born of persecution and cannot be killed by the cessation of persecution. Long before the advent of Curzonism and Fullerism, while the Congress was beslavering the present absolutist bureaucracy with fulsome praise as a good and beneficent Government marred by a few serious defects, while it was singing hymns of loyalty and descanting on the blessings of British rule, Nationalism was already born and a slowly-growing force. It was not born and did not grow in the Congress Pandal, nor in the Bombay Presidency Association, nor in the council of the wise economists and learned reformers, nor in the brains of the Mehtas and Gokhales, nor in the tongues of the Surendranaths and Lalmohons, nor under the hat and coat of the denationalised ape of English speech and manners. It was born like Krishna in the prisonhouse, in the hearts of men to whom India under the good and beneficent government of absolutism seemed an intolerable dungeon, to whom the blessings of an alien despotic rule were hardly more acceptable than plagues of Egypt, who regarded the comfort, safety and ease of the *Pax Britannica,*—an ease and safety not earned by our own effort and vigilance but purchased by the slow loss of every element of manhood and every field of independent activity among us,—as more fatal to the life of the people than the *poosta* of the Moghuls with whom a few seats in the Council or on the Bench and right of entry into the Civil Service and a free Press and platform could not weigh against the starvation of the rack-rented millions, the drain of our life-blood, the atrophy of our energies and the disintergration of our national character and ideals; who looked beyond the temporary ease and opportunities of a few merchants, clerks, and successful professional men to the lasting pauperism and degradation of a great and ancient people. And Nationalism grew who ripened to strength and knowledge, not in the court of princes and the schools of the Brahmins but in the obscure and despised homes of the poor and ignorant. In the cave of the *Sannyasin*, under the garb of the *Fakir*, in the hearts of young men and boys many of whom could not speak a word of English but all could work and dare and sacrifice for the Mother, in the

life of men of education and parts who had received the *mantra* and put from them the desire of wealth and honours to teach and labour so that the good religion might spread, there Nationalism grew slowly to its strength unheeded and unnoticed, until in its good time it came to Bengal, the destined place of its self-manifestation, and for three years, unheeded and unnoticed, spread over the country, gathering in every place the few who were capable of the vision and waiting for the time that would surely come when oppression would begin in earnest and the people look round them for some way of deliverance.

For that an absolute rule will one day begin to coerce and trample on the subject population, is an inevitable law of Nature which none can escape. The master with full power of life and death over his servant can only be gracious so long as he is either afraid of his slave or else sure that the slave will continue willing, obedient and humble in his servitude and not transgress the limits of the freedom allowed him by his master. But in the serf begins to assert himself, to insist on the indulgence conceded to him as on a right, to rebel against occasional harshnesses, to wag his tongue with too insolent a license and disobey imperative orders, then it is not in human nature for the master to refrain from calling for the scourge and the fetters. And if the slave resists the application of the scourge and the imposition of the fetters, it becomes a matter of life and death for the master to enforce his orders and put down the mutiny. Oppression was therefore inevitable, and oppression was necessary that the people as a whole might be disposed to accept Nationalism, but Nationalism was not born of oppression. The oppressions and slaughters committed by Kansa upon the Yadavas did not give birth to Krishna, but they were needed that the people of Mathura might look for the deliverer and accept him when he came. To hope that conciliation will kill Nationalism is to mistake entirely the birth, nature and workings of the new force, nor will either the bebating skill of Mr. Gokhale nor all Dr. Ghosh's army of literary quotations and allusions convince Englishmen that any such hope can be admitted for a moment. For Englishmen are political animals with centuries of political experience in their blood, and though they possess little logic and less wisdom, yet in such matters they have an instinct which is often surer than reason or logic. They know that what is belittled as Extremism is really Nationalism

and Nationalism has never been killed by conciliation; concessions it will only take as new weapons in its fight for complete victory and unabridged dominion. We desire our countrymen on their side to cultivate a corresponding instinct and cherish an invincible faith. There are some who fear that conciliation or policy may unstring the new movement and others who fear that persecution many crush it. Let them have a robuster faith in the destinies of their race. As neither the milk of Putana nor the hoofs of the demon could destroy the infant Krishna, so neither Riponism nor Poona prosecutions could check the growth of Nationalism while yet it was an indistinct force; and as neither Kansa's wiles nor his *vishakanyas* nor his mad elephants nor his wrestlers could kill Krishna revealed in Mathura, so neither a revival of Riponism nor the poison of discord sown by bureaucratic allurements, nor Fullerism plus hooliganism nor prosecution under cover of legal statutes can slay Nationalism now that it has entered the arena. Nationalism is an *avatar* and cannot be slain, Nationalism is a divinely appointed *shakti* of the Eternal and must do its God-given work before it returns to the bosom of the Universal Energy from which it came.

# 21

## SRIKRISHNA AND AUTOCRACY

Sri Aurobindo

It was not in vain that Brutus polluted his hands with the blood of his own beloved comrade and exclaimed by way of palliating his sanguinary action, "as he was ambitious I slew him." Ambition scorns humanity, believes that the world exists for serving him and him alone and turns all abilities to questionable purposes. Ambition is the one great obstacle in the way of establishing the sovereignty of people all over the world. It is sometime the ambition of an individual, sometimes that of a nation. Whoever does not delight in being once of the multitude and has no desire to share their joys and sorrows, can hardly do any good to mankind. He may be a genius. But his genius only proves to be a curse to his race and smothers their possibilities. He creates a desert where he is the only flower to waste its sweetness. The great men of the world who were, born to bring about the real advancement of mankind had a marked democratic tendency. They were more anxious to raise than to rise. They used their abilities for the betterment of human lot. Though they were themselves highly gifted, they never showed any contempt for the common run of people but, on the contrary, they freely mixed with them, worked for them and as one of them. This is the one great distinguishing trait in the character of all real benefactors of humanity, be he a prophet or a man of action. Their universal sympathy radiates all through their words and actions.

Look at that one great divine figure in the history of India—the God in man whose life and teachings influence Hindu thoughts even to the present day. The scourge of all tyrants, counsellors of kings, was brought up amongst cowherds. They were his playmates, his early associates. The God of the Brahmins acknowledged a milkman as his father—*Nandanandan* is the epithet of endearment used in almost every prayer addressed to Srikrishan. He always looked back with pride and joy on the scenes of his early adventures and wanderings. He never forgot the old familiar faces. The charm of village life was considerably heightened by his presence and doings. He always thought of his early village friends and turned his attention to their good. The great deliverer of mankind from despotism of all types and degrees imbibed and strengthened his democratic tendencies by living and moving amongst people working in the humblest spheres of life. The early life of Srikrishna only emphasises the necessity of being in close and constant touch with the people, consulting their wishes and studying their habits and thoughts to quality oneself for being a servant of humanity. On the occasion of the famous Rajasuya *Yajna* held by Judishtira at his instance, the duty which Srikrishna allotted to himself was to wash the feet of the assembled Brahmins. Where is to be found in the history of the world a nobler object lesson of what is really demanded of all great workers in the cause of humanity. They must not hate men, they must not ride roughshod over their feelings, they must not treat their opinion with contempt, they must not consider their riches or their stations in life as their only claims to the attention of men in authority. They must mix with all, consult all and use their exceptional capacities to do their will. They may modify their views by their superior wisdom and keen insight, but they can hardly afford to ignore and disregard what they say and wish to have for themselves.

Great men can only act permanently by forming great nation; and no one man, even though it were an incarnation of God Himself, can in one generation effect such a work. But where the nation had been merely enkindled for a while by a great man's spirit, the light passes away with him who communicated it, and the nation, when he is gone, is like a dead body to which magic power had for a moment unnatural life; when the charm has ceased, the body is cold and stiff as before.

Srikrishna was not like a Hannibal or Napoleon. When Srikrishna struck down the despots, he told them plainly that he had no personal ambition to satisfy. When his colleagues and followers hesitated to do his bidding, he argued with them, told them the higher object he had in view, enlightened their understanding, raised them to his level and inspired willing obedience in them. Though the most powerful of men, he was never dictatorial or autocratic. When Arjun was unnerved by sick sentimentality, he disclosed to him the great humanitarian principle that was at the back of that carnage and bloodshed to which he had set them. He explained to him the duties of a Kshatriya, taught him to discriminate between right and wrong and after convincing him with his incontrovertible logic made him plunge head and soul into the war. He tried to make the nation great, to purge of its curses, to enkindle amongst them a permanent light which will work in his absence and for good. It was not with a light heart that he incited the Pandavas to a war with their own kinsmen. He tried good many proposals of conciliation even against the advice of his followers.

His policy was to make overtures for peace but always with some strength at the back, but all these failing no more to seek to conciliate the unrelenting for but to measure strength with him, regardless of consequences. The nation that looks up to Srikrishna as their ideal hero and man of action can never submit to autocracy in any form. They will never insult the divinity in themselves by bending their knees to an autocrat, however powerful.

# 22

## THE GLORY OF GOD IN MAN

SRI AUROBINDO

Whoever is still under the influence of intellectual pride, is shocked when people depreciate the reason as the supreme guide. He asks how is it possible for a man of culture to depreciate the mason and exalt some extraneous influence like that which people call God. But these doubters are under the influence of European materialism which tries to confine man to his material portion and deny him the possibility of a divine origin and a divine destiny. When Europe left Christianity to the monk and the arcetic and forgot the teachings of the Galilean, she exposed herself to a terrible fate which will yet overtake her. God in man is the whole revelation and the whole of religion. What Christianity taught dimly, Hinduism made plain to the intellect in Vedanta. When India remembers the teaching she received from Shankaracharya, Ramanuja and Madhava, when she realizes what Sri Ramkrishna came to reveal, then she will rise. Her very life is Vedanta.

If anyone thinks that we are merely intellectual beings, he is not a Hindu. Hinduism leaves the glorification of intellectuality to those who have never seen God. She is commissioned by Him to speak only of his greatness and majesty and she has so spoken for thousands of years. When we first received a European education, we allowed ourselves to be misled by the light of science. Science is a light within a limited room, not the sun which illumines the world. The *Aparo Vidya* is the sum of science

but there is a *higher Vidya,* a mightier knowledge. When we are under the influence of the lower knowledge, we imagine that we are doing everything and try to reason out the situation we find ourselves in, as if our intellect were sovereign and omnipotent. But this is an attitude of delusion and *maya.* Whoever has once felt the glory of God within him, can never again believe that the intellect is supreme. There is a higher voice, there is a more unfailing oracle. It is in the heart where God resides. He works through the brain, but the brain is only one of His instruments. Whatever the brain may plan, the heart knows first and whoever can go beyond the brain to the heart, will hear the voice of the Eternal. This is what Srijut Aurobindo Ghose said in his Bombay speech. But our contemporary, the *Indian Patriot,* has lamented his downfall from the high pedestal of culture he once occupied. Our contemporary has forgotten the teachings of Vivekananda which were once so powerful in Madras. What does he think was the cause of the great awakening in Bengal ?

When Lord Curzon thought to rend Bengal as under, he deprived her of all her old pride and reliance upon her intellectual superiority. She had thought to set her wits against British power; and believed that the intellect of her sons would be a match for the clumsy brains of the English statesmen. Lord Curzon showed her that Power is too direct and invincible to be outwitted. The brains of Bengal did their best to cope with him and they failed. No course remained open to Bengal which her intellect could suggest. But when she was utterly reduced to despair, the time came for her own power to awake and set itself against that of the foreigner. She flung aside the devices of the Greek and took on herself the majesty of Roman strength and valour. When she declared the Boycott, she did so without calculation, without reckoning chances, without planning how the Boycott could succeed. She simply declared it. Was the intellect at work when she declared it ? Was it her leaders who planned it as a means of bringing the British to their knees ?

Everybody knows that it was not so. It was Kishoregunj, it was Magura, the obscure villages and towns of East Bengal which first declared the Boycott. What brain planned it, what voice first uttered it, history will never be able to discover. None planned it, but it was in the heart of the nation and God revealed it. If human brains had thought over the matter, Boycott would never

have been declared. Srijut Bipin Chandra Pal is the most powerful brain at present at work in Bengal, but Srijut Bipin Chandra has himself often related that he was opposed to the Boycott in its inception, because his intellect refused to assent to the economic possibility of Boycott. So with all the men who were then the recognized brains and voices of Bengal. Only the nation had Boycott in their hearts and the heart of Bengal refused to be silenced by its brain. So Boycott was declared. Had the *Indian Patriot* been the mouthpiece of Bengal, it would have asked for a plan of operations. But what plan of operations could have been given ? So we see from this one great example what Srijut Aurobindo Ghose meant when he said that it was God's work and not man's. If the *Indian Patriot* can show us who planned the Boycott, or how it has been guided to success by human intellect, we will accept his view of things. Meanwhile, we shall take leave to approve of the view expressed by Srijut Aurobindo Ghose. God is behind this movement and He does not need anyone to tell Him how to bring it to success. He will see to that Himself. Whatever plan we may make, we shall find quite useless when the time for action comes. Revolutions are always full of surprises, and whoever thinks he can play chess with a Revolution will soon find how terrible is the grasp of God and how insignificant the human reason before the whirlwind of His breath. That man only is likely to dominate the chances of a Revolution, who, makes no plans but preserves his heart pure for the will of God to declare itself. The great rule of life is to have no schemes but one unalterable purpose. If the will is fixed on the purpose it sets itself to accomplish, then circumstances will suggest the right course; but the schemer finds himself always tripped up by the unexpected.

# 23

## BIPARITA BUDDHI

SRI AUROBINDO

We have dealt with Morleyism as exhaustively as possible. It is a principle clear, consistent, logical and, what is more, highly fascinating to the members of the Imperial race. The philosopher, after looking at the question in all its bearings, has pronounced that an absolute personal rule is the very best thing for India. It may not suit the people of Europe, it may not suit the people of America, it may not suit the people of the self-governing colonies, it may not suit even Japan, but it cannot but suit India for the simple reason that her rulers are averse to any other form of Government. The plea of unfitness, want of homogeneity, of there being no community of interest, religion and language has been repeated *ad nauseum* and it has lost its freshness. The philosopher has at last succumbed to the wisdom of Anglo-India and the commonplaces with which his Budget speech is interspersed might very well adorn the columns of the *Englishman* and the *Pioneer*. His political philosophy is the philosophy of the Hare Street Journal, his poetry is that of Rudyard Kipling, his history is the dark takes of autocracy and oppression gleaned perhaps from the experience of the experience of a retired Anglo-Indian. Shakespeare and Milton did not illumine his imagination when he peered into the future of India. Mill, Carlyle or Herbert Spencer did not shed any light on his reasoning when he applied himself to the study of the problems in India. Hume, Froude, Kingsley or Freeman did not help him at all in taking a correct reading of

Weak peoples have leaped into manhood by His direct interfence; when He ceases to lead them into temptation, the veil of sympathy is torn asunder and the mailed fist makes its appearance in all its terror. There is a higher Power behind Mr. Morley which has withdrawn from his face the veil of Liberalism and has laid him bare before our eyes as the typical John Bull with the full equipment of tiger qualities. It is He who has obscured his vision, it is He who has paralysed his intellect, it is He who has darkened his imagination, it is He who has made his mind shrink back into its old Saxon narrowness, it is He who has made him defy the accumulated wisdom of ages, it is He who has stood between him and his traditions. In short, it is He who is responsible for that *biparita buddhi* which is the sure precursor of the fall of Empires and the beginning of a new order of things. The one thing that is true in Nature is change; the law of flux and reflux is written large on the face of Nature and the face of science. God fulfils Himself in many ways and, if we take the clue from their own poet, He is perhaps intervening lest even the unmixed good of British rule should corrupt the world. Mr. Morley is a victim to this *biprita buddhi* as his predecessors were on the eve of the American Revolution, as Duryodhana and Dhritarashtra were on the eve of the battle of Kurukshetra, as Ravana was before the fall of the mighty Rakshaha kingdom, as the ancient tyrants or the French monarchs were before they made way for the emancipation of their section of humanity. Mr. Morley is not to blame, the London *Times* is not to blame, the whole host of journals, British and Anglo-Indian, are not to blame, the members of the House who received Morley's decision with acclamation are not to blame, even the redoutable Vincent is not to blame, the local despots are not to blame, the exasperated civilian is not to blame. The hold has to be tightened before it is let go. This is the meaning of repression preceding a reawakening.

The *biparita buddhi* that helps the regeneration of weak and oppressed peoples is manifestly at work. We welcome it and pray for its complete ascendancy for some time in Mr. Morley and other British statesmen.

# 24

## MR. MORLEY'S PRONOUNCEMENT*

SRI AUROBINDO

The attitude assumed by Mr. Morley in answer to the questions in Parliament about the latest act of medieval tyranny, cannot surprise those who had something more than surface knowledge of English politics and English politicians. Those who had been behind the scenes in English political life, know perfectly well that there sincerity is an element which does not exist. Professions, principles, ideals are the tinsel and trappings of the stage; each politician is an actor who has a part to play and plays it, certain set sentiments to mouth and mouths them. But the only reality behind is a mass of interests, personal interests, class interests, party interests, and the ruling principle of action is to "catch votes" and avoid the loss of votes. We have all noticed how persistently the Anglo-Indian Press out here talk of every movement as being artificial and the work of "professional agitators", and how persistently they refuse to credit the popular leaders, even when they are men of high moral worth like Lala Lajpat Rai, with sincerity. We generally put this down to the perverseness and wilful misrepresentation of a reptile press; the real truth is that they are judging us from their knowledge of their own country. They are

*This article was written in the background of the promulgation of an Ordinance by the Government of India, forbidding public meetings without prior official permission. This Ordinance was first applied to Lahore on May 11, 1907 and subsequently extended to Eastern Bengal and Assam where Barisal was the first to be honoured with proclamation on May 18, 1907.

perfectly well aware that in England politics is a huge piece of humbug; it professes to be a conflict of principles and is really a conflict a more or less sordid interests. They know that in England a sincere politician is a contradiction in terms. They are therefore unable to believe in the existence in India of a sincerity and reality for which their own country offers no precedent. The only exceptions to the general rule of insincerity are the novices in politics—the maiden innocence of whose souls is soon rubbed off by a few Parliamentary sessions,—and a handful of independent-minded eccentrics who have no chance whatever of rising to influence, much less to office. Occasionally a man of absolute sincerity like Mr. Bradlaugh breaks the record, but that is only once in half a century.

Which Mr. John Morley entered politics, he entered as a literary man and austere philosopher and brought the spirit of philosophy into politics. His unbending fidelity to his principles earned him the name of Honest John, and this sobriquet, with the reputation for uprightness of which it was the badge, has survived long after the uprightness itself had perished in the poisoned air of office. No one can be long a Cabinet Minister in England and yet remain a man of unswerving principle. As Indian Secretary, Mr. Morley could not be expected to carry his philosophic principles into the India Office. On the contrary, there were several reasons why he should be even more reactionary than ordinary Secretaries of State. The Secretary of State does not represent India or stand for her interests; he represents England and his first duty is to preserve British supremacy; but Mr. Morley is also one of the foremost exponents of the most arrogant and exclusive type of enlightenment in nineteenth-century Europe, the scientific, rationalist, agnostic, superior type. As such, he was the last man to think well of or understand Asiatics or to regard them as anything but semi-barbarous anachronisms. Moreover, as the *Bengalee's* London correspondent pointed out this week, he is evidently showing sings of senile decay which is shown partly in his growing ill-temper and intolerance of contradiction, but most in the mental languor which prevents him from questioning or scrutinising the opinions and information served upto him by the India Office. The verbatim fidelity with which he reproduces whatever Anglo-India tutors him to say, it strikingly evidenced by his answers to Messrs Rutherford and O'Grady. His remarks on the

situation in East Bengal might have been taken for an extract from the *Englishman's* editorials or from the imaginative reports of the special correspondent of the *Empire.*

Mr. Morley makes no attempt to justify the arbitrary action he has sanctioned except on the plea of necessity, the tyrant's plea, which no one in former days would have held up more eloquently to condemnation and ridicule than Mr. Morley himself. He does not tell us why Lala Lajpat Rai was deported or what were the charges against him; probably he does not himself know, but simply accepted the assurance of the able and experienced Denzil and the level-headed Minto that the step was necessary. For they are the men on the spot, and Mr. Morley's conception of his position in the India Office is that he is there to act as a buffer between the men on the spot and adverse criticism. We need not discuss his utterances; they are merely faithful echoes of Anglo-Indian special pleading, in which there is nothing that is new and very little that is true. But the threat which he held out to the Moderate party is worth-noting. For some time Mr. Morley and Lord Minto, with whom the Secretary of State rather superfluously assures us that he has an excellent understanding, have been talking big of some wonderful reform that they have up their sleeves and feverishly assuring the world that these fine things are all their very own idea and by no means forced on them by Indian agitation. And now we are told, or rather the Moderate leaders are told, that they will lose these pretty toys if they do not help the bureaucracy to put down "disorder", or, in other words, to put down Nationalism. Mr. Morley offers them a certain administrative reform if they can give up for themselves or can induce their countrymen to give up the aspiration towards freedom. The Anglo-Indian journals all take up the cry and the absolute insincerity of it is sufficiently shown by the fact that even so venomous, reactionary and anti-Indian a print as the *Englishman* proses solemnly on the theme! The object of these threats is manifest. The sudden succession of coercive measures may for a moment have stunned the people, it may for a few days dismay the more timid, but it has certainly created a deep and settled exasperation throughout the country. The dismay is temporary, the exasperation will be permanent. Mr. Morley and Anglo-India hope to take advantage of the moment of dismay in order to half-bribe, half-intimidate the Moderate party into detaching themselves from

any opposition to these coercive measures. This is a vain hope. For even to the meanest political intelligence two considerations will at once occur. The first is that there is such a thing as buying a pig in a poke. Even the simplest buyer will want to see the animal before he puts down its price, and even the most confiding Moderate will want to know what is this wonderful reform of Mr. Morley's before he sells the country's future and risks his influence with the people for its sake. But on this point Mr. Morley preserves as studious a silence as on the charges against Lajpat Rai. Again, Mr. Morley and Lord Minto have hinted that their measure is an instalment of self-government, yet Mr. Morley emphatically declares that he will never strip the bureaucracy of any means of repression they possess, however barbarous and antiquated. It is evident therefore that whatever "self-government" may be in store for us, it is a "self-government" in which executive despotism will remain absolutely undiminished and unmodified. We have heard of a despotism tempered by epigrams and a despotism tempered by assassination, but this is the first time we hear of a self-government tempered by deportations. We do not think any section of Indian opinion is likely to rise to this lure. The *Bengalee* has already rejected the one-sided bargain with scorn and even the *Indian Mirror* has received it without enthusiasm. Coerce, if you will,—we welcome coercion, but be sure that it will rank the whole of India against you without distinction of parties.

# 25

## MORLEYISM ANALYSED

SRI AUROBINDO

The fuller reports of Mr. Morley's speech to hand by mail do not in any essential point alter the impression that was produced by *Reuter's* summary. The whole of the speech turns upon a single sentence as its pivot—the statement that British rule will continue, ought to continue and must continue. Mr. Morley does not say, for ever, but that is understood. It follows that if the continuance of British rule on any terms is the fundamental necessity, any and every means used for its preservation is legitimate. Compared with that supreme necessity justice does not matter, humanity does not matter, truth does not matter, morality may be trampled on, the laws of God may be defined. The principles of Liberalism though they may have been professed a thousand times over, must be discarded by the English rulers of India as inapplicable to a country of "300 millions of people, composite, heterogenous, of different races with different histories and different faiths." All these things weigh as dust in the balance against the one supreme necessity. If the cantinuance of British rule seems to be threatened by any popular activity however legitimate, resort must be had to any weapon, no matter of what nature, in order to put down that activity. Reasons of State, "the tyrant's plea necessity" must be held to be of supreme authority and to override all other considerations. Mr. Morley admits that the plea is a dangerous one, but sedition is still more dangerous. The danger of the reason of State is

that it can cover and will inevitably be stretched to cover the repetition of "dangers, mischiefs and iniquities in our olden history and, perhaps, in our present history", in other words, Mr. Morley's reasoning in favour of the present "inequities" in India can equally well be used to justify every utmost atrocity, cruelty, vileness with which tyrants, ancient or modern, have attempted to put down opposition to their sovereign will. Wholesale deportation, arbitrary imprisonment, massacre, outrage, police anarchy, torture of prisoners, every familiar feature of Russian repression can be brought under the head of weapons necessary to combat sedition and can be justified by the plea of State necessity. This is the danger of reason of State, a danger that recent events in India and especially current events in the Punjab show to be by no means so remote as we might have some months ago imagined. But the danger of sedition is the cessation of British rule. And in the opinion of Mr. Morley, supported by an almost unanimous consensus of British opinion, the re-enactment by a British Government of the iniquities and atrocities of ancient and modern tyranny is preferable to the cessation of British rule, it is better to take the risk of these than to take the risk of losing the absolute control of Britain over India. This is Mr. Morley's arguments, approved by Conservative and Radical alike. . . . No, we are not distorting or exaggerating. There it is, plump and plain in the speech of the great British Radical, the Liberal philosopher, the panegyrics of Burke and Gladstone. It is the last word of England to India on the great issue of Indian self-government.

What does Mr. Morley mean by British rule? Not the British connexion, not the continuance of India as a self-governing unit in a federation of free peoples which shall be called the British Empire. No, Mr. Morley is quite as hostile to the Moderate ideal of self-government on colonial lines, modified *Swaraj*, as to the Nationalist ideal of *Swaraj*, as to the Nationalist ideal of *Swaraj* pure and simple. The educated minority in India have the presumption to think themselves capable of working the government of the country as smoothly as the heaven-born Briton himself, but Mr. Morley is persuaded that they would not work it for a week. This is final. If after a hundred years of English education and no inconsiderable training in the subordinate conduct of the bureaucratic machinery of Government, the

educated class are not fit to be entrusted even by gradual stages with the supreme government of Indian affairs, then they will never be fit. And we must remember that the policy of the rulers henceforth will be to control and restrict and not to encourage or promote the spread of education of the highest sort. From our own point of view, we may put it more strongly and say that if a hundred years of dependence and foreign control have so immensely impaired that governing capacity of the Indian races which they showed with such splendid results for the last three thousand years, then another century will absolutely and for ever destroy it, Mr. Morley is therefore logically justified in reiterating his conviction that personal and absolute foreign control must be the leading feature of Indian administration to the very end of time. This is what Mr. Morley means by the continuance of British rule, he means the continuance of a personal and absolute British control pervading the administration of affairs in every department, in other words, a bureaucratic despotism strongly flavoured by the independent personal omnipotence of local governors and local officials. The problem which former British statesmen professed to have before them was the problem of gradually training and associating the Indians in the European system of government until they were fit to take over absolute control of affairs and allow their patrons and protectors to withdraw. This problem does not any longer trouble the peace of British statesmen; on the contrary, it is definitely and for ever disclaimed and put aside as a chimera—or a pretence. British rule in India will continue, ought to continue and must continue. What, then, is the problem which is troubling Mr. Morley? The problem is "the difficulty of combining personal government in our dependency with the rights of free speech and free meeting". Personal government, absolute government, despotism, that is the supreme necessity which must be continued for ever at the sacrifice of morality, justice and every other consideration. Subject to that necessity Mr. Morley proposes to allow a certain amount of free speech, if that be possible. Free speech was harmless so long as the Indian people had not set their heart on self-government; but now that they are resolved to have nothing short of self-government, free speech means seditious speech, and sedition is not consistent with the continuance of the absolute and personal British control. How then can free speech and British

despotion be combined ? How can fire and water occupy the same space ? That is the problem, which Mr. Morley refuses to believe insoluble, and he solves it by proclaiming the areas where free speech has been chiefly employed—and by establishing an Advisory Council of Notables.

It may be asked, if the continuance of absolute government is the whole policy of British statesmanship, why does Mr. Morley trouble himself about free speech at all or propose any reforms ? That question can be easily answered by a consideration of the suggested reforms. The first of these reforms is a Council of Notables. Mr. Morley has told us what is the object of this body; it is to a sort of medium of communication between the government and the people. Of course, Mr. Morley is quite mistaken in supposing that such a body can really serve the object he has in view, but we are concerned for the present not with the sufficiency of the means he is devising for his object, but with the object itself. The second reform is an expansion of the Legislative Councils and greater facilities to the elected members for the expression of their views; in other words, the object of the expanded Legislative Councils is to keep the Government in India in touch with the views of the educated class. The third reform is the admission of Indian members to the Indian members to the India Council, and it is obvious that here again the object is that these Indian members should keep the Government in England in touch with the opinions of educated India, just as the elected members of the Legislative Councils are to keep the Government in India in touch with the same opinion. The fourth reform is the decentralisation of the administration so that each local official may become an independent local despot. The object is clearly defined, first, to give him greater opportunities of being in touch with the people; secondly, to give him a greater power of personal despotic control within his own jurisdiction unhampered by the interference of higher authorities. All the reforms have one single object, one governing idea,—an absolute personal despotic British control *in touch with the people.* That is Mr. Morley's policy.

The object of keeping in touch with the people and knowing their opinions is not to redress their grievances, still less to allow their opinions any control over the administration. The object is quite different. A despotism out of touch with the people is a

despotism continually in danger; ignorant of the currents of opinion, ignorant of the half-visible activities among its subjects, ignorant of the perils gathering in the vast obscurity, it must one day be suddenly surprised and perhaps overthrown by the unforeseen outburst of activities and dangers it had not anticipated. It is in order to avoid these dangers that Mr. Morley wishes to employ various means of keeping in touch with public opinion and its manifestations. He talks in his speech of the necessity of the rulers putting themselves in the skins of the ruled, in other words, of thoroughly understanding their thoughts, feelings and point of view. This does not mean that they shall rule India according to the sentiments, views and wishes of the Indian people. The whole conduct of Mr. Morley and the whole trend of his utterances show that he means the opinions of the Government to prevail without regard to Indian opinions and sentiments. The rulers are to understand the ruled so that they may know how their measures are likely to affect the minds of the latter, how opposition can best be persuaded or *samjaode* into quiescence and how, if persuasion is useless, it can most swiftly and successfully be crushed. Through the Council of Notables, the Legislative Councils and the Indian members of the India Council, the Government will come to know the ideas, views and feelings of the people, through the two former bodies they will try to present unpopular measures in such a way as to coax, cajole, delude or intimidate public opinion into a quiet acceptance. If they cannot do this, then through the decentralised local officers they can keep in touch with the popular temper, learn its manifestations and activities and successfully and promptly put down opposition by local measures, if possible, otherwise by Imperial rescripts, laws and ordinances and every possible weapon of despotic repression.

We have analysed Mr. Morley's speech at length, because people in India have not the habit of following the turns of British Parliamentary eloquence or reading between the lines of the speech of a Cabinet Minister. They are therefore likely to miss its true bearings and fail to understand the policy it enunciates. Read by an eye accustomed to the reservations and implications by which a British Minister makes himself intelligible without committing himself unnecessarily, Mr. Morley's speech is an admirably clear, connected, logical and, let us add, unusually

amazingly frank expression of a very straightforward and coherent policy. To maintain in India an absolute rule as rigid as any Czar's; to keep that rule in class touch with the currents of Indian sentiment, opinion and activity and to crush any active opposition by an immediate resort to the ordinary weapons of despotism, ordinances, deportations, prosecutions and a swift and ruthless terrorism, this is Morleyism as explained by its author.

# 26

## THE PRECEDENCE OF POLITICAL REFORM

SRI AUROBINDO

It would be difficult to imagine anything more ridiculous than the Pharisaical cant of Anglo-Indians about the impossibility of Indians becoming fit for political advancement on democratic lines prior to the complete renovation of their industries and social institutions. "Feed and clothe your countrymen first", says one wiseacre, "before you think of imitating the healthy countries of Europe". "Democratise your society", says another, "before attempting to establish political democracy." All those countries that possess popular Government, possess wealth and social equality as well, and must not India also have these before she can aspire a democracy, so runs the infallible Anglo-Indian logic, provokingly amusing by its confusion of cause and effect, by its utter lack of the sense of sequence. The only unfortunate part of it is that a considerable number of our own countrymen have been deluded into a belief in this fiction of the sequential order of a country's social, industrial and political development, amongst whom we regret having to count even Mr. Gokhale. India paralysed by poverty, plague-stricken, in the clutches of a perennial famine : India, the battle ground of jarring faiths and rival races, divided against herself by her minute castes and soul-killing superstitions—is it not heartless, they cry, to speak of her political improvement before you have lifted her out of the deal level of this unbearable existence ? In the terrible presence of the obvious and the visible, in their generous impatience of the

effects that appear on the surface, they are unable to think of the producing cause that lies underneath hidden from their immediate gaze. A little expenditure of thought, unconditioned by any implicit faith in the axiomatic truth of whatever Englishmen may choose to write and say, will, however, soon reveal to these victims of Anglo-Indian hypocrisy the utter unsoundness that underlies this insistence on the necessary priority of social and industrial to political reforms. It is opposed to reason and to the positive testimony of history. It is easy enough to dwell glibly on the need for social reforms; but what, pray, is the precondition of such reforms ? We are all of us alive to the existence of undoubted defects in our society, and of the cumulative character of the harm they have been causing, but we also know that in order to remove them and uplift our society to a higher view of life, we must first provide our people with a sound, healthy and extensive system of education, the impartiality of whose culture will not be disturbed by the necessity of creating an ideal of loyalty to an alien despotism, and of reconciliation to its eternal continuation. A free and unfettered informing of the people's mind with the best thought of the age is the only means of bringing into being a spontaneous desire for social reform—and until this social aspiration has been created, until men's minds have been moulded by education into the receptive attitude, the seeker after the renewal of society will only be baulked of his generous intention. And as a fact the real Prophet or the Saviour, the Krishna, the Buddha or the Christ, who is to remould and renew society, unclothe the human soul and reinvest it with the luminous garment of Divinity, can never descend to the earth till she is in spiritual preparedness for his advent. He only comes when the mind of man has already been filled with longings and aspirings, ideas and ideals—he then comes and gathers them all up into his single being, a complete epitome of his age, the living demonstration of a realized ideal, bringing to society the saving conviction of the possibility of every man being able to live the social ideal. Filled by the vivid sense of his purifying presence, men are moved to striving after betterment, the relieving of sorrow and suffering, the regeneration of society and race. The preparatory penetration of the humnn heart by an idea or ideal that calls into life this incarnation, was brought about in older days by the invasion of an alien religion, or by an overpowering conviction

of sin, but follows in our times in the wake of an education that has been imparted impartially to one and all. The education that the Government has been giving us, falls miserably short of this great requirement. It extends to a limited few and fails to inspire even them with any divine wonderment, the curiousity to know or the passion to leave the world better than they have found it by a single act or thought. Imparted with the predetermined purpose of reconciling the mind of its recipient with the order of things as they are, it has necessarily culminated in the production of a monstrous species whose object in acquiring knowledge cannot reach beyond the vision of mere luxurious animal life, who have been content with merely thinking of and describing the incident of their political slavery in the language of freedom learned from the noble literature of England, and then imagining themselves free; who have been content with the mere explanations their text-books give of their country's economic condition, content furthermore with their life of mere external conformity to ancient customs which they have ceased to have faith in, with the daily lies of their life, with the thousand and one defects, evils and insincerities of the disorganised society around them which they have not the moral force to recognize. This passive life of acquiescence in things that be, lived by the average English-educated Indian, is the most effective piece of destructive criticism on the education given by the Indian Government. The Indian and his society cannot be reformed till you have thoroughly purged and purified his thoughts and aspirations by giving him free and impartial education in the place of the present loyalty-ridden instruction with the motto of *status quo* fastened round its neck. The present political animation of the educated Indian has been, inspite of his education, due to the general Asiatic awakening, and to the emergence of his common sense—thanks to Lord Curzon—out of the *debris* of his ruined faith in the constitutional character of his country's alien Government. The education that the Social reformer wants, the Bureaucracy cannot and will not give. The opponent will no doubt retort, "Why do you not then have the education that you really want instead of merely cursing the Government for the education it has chosen to give you ?"—certainly a fair and just resort. But the people have given its proper answer by founding the National Council of Education and the different National Schools and Colleges that

are springing to life all over the land. Even these however cannot bring about the desideratum of the aspirant to social reorganization; for that would require the extension of education to every man and every woman, and such education cannot be organized except with the aid of State finance. A glance at the system of free education that is being given to the people of the independent countries, will at once convince us of this. The enormous sums of money that have to be spent on such national education, could not possibly be got together by any private enterprise, however and gigantic. The National Universities that we are starting, will produce men who will be invaluable assets for the future of the country, but unless they are supported by the financial resources of the State, they can never extend their scope and operation so as to be able to reach every Indian man, woman and child. Consequently they can never bring about that necessary preparation of the popular mind on which depends, as we have tried to indicate above, the chance of a successful social resuscitation. Let the Indian social reformer, therefore, if he is true to the cause he advocates, first secure the control of his country's finance without which his ideal cannot be brought to fruition.

The enthusiast for the priority of India's industrial revivification will find himself faced with the same necessity of acquiring control over the guidance of his country's affairs. India's poverty is mainly due to the destruction of her industries in an unequal struggle for existence by the competition of those of England and other foreign countries. All her men flourishing under a diversified employment have been driven to agriculture as the sole source of subsistence left open, and the remedy obviously is the re-creation of her industries which will drain off into remunerative employment the surplus labour under whose over-weight her agriculture has ever since ground. But the creation of fresh industries in India must necessarily result in the exclusion of her present foreign imports, the main bulk of which happens to come from England. And it is certain that the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy whose primary duty in India is to safeguard the interests of their own countrymen will never allow us to do anything that will tell so directly against those very interests. Our Government cannot therefore for a moment entertain the idea of granting us protection without which India must remain as the other countries of the world remained, powerless to build up new industries in the face of

the terrible competition of England. Even that partial and ineffectual protection which we have christened "Boycott", the Government is trying its hardest to stamp out. The seeker after social progress and the zealot for industrial development, if they are sincere in their profession and really feel the stirrings of an abiding love for their country, will both find themselves confronted in the ultimate resort with the fact of foreign Government as an insuperable obstacle to the actualisation of their respective ideals. The political salvation of our country is thus the prime necessity, not only because it is worth having in itself, but also because it is the one precondition of our national progress in the different walks of life. It is needless, however, to comment any further on the heartless hypocrisy, the intolerable sanctimony of our Anglo-Indian advisers who first make sure that only such education is imparted to our people as would effectually cripple their mental and moral faculties for the assimilation and execution of progressive ideas, and also that all the necessary steps are taken for the perpetration of our economic serfdom, and then turn round to us and tell us we must renovate our decaying society and industries before we can have even the right to cherish political ideals.

Let us for a moment call their attention to their own history. What was the condition of English society in the eighteenth or the first part of the nineteenth century ? Here is an illustration : During the Napoleonic war the Parliament, inspired by the highly patriotic intention of encouraging the growth of population, enacted that every mother would receive weekly from the State the sum of six pence for every legitimate child and *two shillings and six pence* for every illegitimate child that she may have brought into the world to add to the fighting strength of England. The student of English Economic History is well aware of this enactment which throws a flood of light on the kind of morality that then obtained in England. The encouragement of illegitimate births was then obviously in harmony with the highest moral consciousness of the country. Otherwise it could not have been proposed and sanctioned by Parliament. And what was the industrial condition of the country during this same period? The people—men, women and children—were mercilessly exploited and worked to death by the captains of industry who were fully equipped against their victims with all the weapons of tyranny and coercion that it was in the power of

Parliament to give them. It was only after the terrible shock of the French Revolution that shook the English plutocracy to its foundation and culminated in the popular upheaval of 1832, that social and industrial reform became possible in England. The people possessed of political power could and did then secure all the reforms they needed—from trade, the prevention of the inhuman treatment of the labourer, the revision of law and justice, free and universal education. The state of France before and after the Revolution, and of the other countries of Europe before and after their political emancipation, brings us face to face with the same law of historic progression. It is the political salvation of all these countries that has now opened to their people infinite vistas of progress in the different directions of human development, religious, social, industrial and others. We want to secure to our people the same infinite possibility of advancement, and must we not in order to do that follow the path that the others have trodden ? No, says, Anglo-India; she would not have us venture on the way to glory and greatness pointed out by logic and lighted by history; she calls us to the impossible task of inverting the law of historic growth which has its roots deep down in human psychology.

We will put one question which should test Anglo-Indian sincerity, if indeed such a thing ever existed. If the Anglo-Indians would like to see us progress socially and industrially, will they persuade their Government to give us the power of direction over their educational and industrial departments, provided we undertake loyally to leave them in peace to carry on to their heart's content the administrative and all the other work of the country ? Supposing we took Anglo-India at her word and asked her to make it good—well, we can anticipate the answer !

# 27

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF PATRIOTISM

SRI AUROBINDO

Colootola Philosophy has been shocked at our statement that for an Indian to acquiesce in an ideal of colonial self-government is the very negation of patriotism. The chief defect of our idea of patriotism is that "it practically brands as unpatriotic everybody who is anybody in the country, from Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji who presided over the last Congress to the meanest Nationalist delegate who attended the Congress." Our knowledge of Logic is not sufficiently deep and discriminating to make us reject the universal and historical connotation of a term in favour of the local and provincial. The *Bengalee* could have as well told us that a patriot must be an enemy of Sj. Bipin Chandra Pal, because otherwise some prominent Calcutta "Moderates" would forfeit their right to that title. We shall define patriotism as people have all along defined it without pausing to consider, whether such a definition includes within the category of patriots those whom the *Bengalee* prefers to give that name. According to the Hindu idea of patriotism, none but those who look upon their Motherland as superior even to Heaven itself are patriots. It is only a denationalised imagination that can take pride in seeking to make India a part of the British Empire. The *Bengalee*, with all its vaunted knowledge of Philosophy, has yet to learn that patriotism has a dual aspect. According to Mr. Morley, patriotism is regard for the well-being of the people of the country as well as affection for its flag, and the flag only symbolizes the greatness of a country.

Patriotism may sacrifice even material well-being to greatness. Free and united Itlay is not all right materially, it is groaning under a great debt, but still the requirement of patriotism has been satisfied. It has ensured all the conditions for self-realization. Those who think that self-realization can be possible by a mere autonomous administration, do not know what they talk about. The consciousness that we are linked to a great past, that we can command a greater future, that our civilization has a mission of its own, cannot tolerate dependence in any form. The overshadowing influence of some power above, however lightly felt, cannot but stand in the way of self-realization. If the ultimate ambition of India is only to make herself an integral part of the British Empire, what incentive is there to achive her own greatness ? She will then be under an eternal eclipse afflicted with a permanent disability to make her intrinsic glory known and felt ? Why is it that America distances so vastly the self-governing colonies in every department of activity ? The answer is very plain. America is free, while these colonies still owe allegiance to their mother country and are overshadowed by her greatness. And it is for this reason that a separatist movement has of late been set on foot in Canada and in Australia. Are we then to welcome the fetters from which the colonies are trying to shake loose ? In the recent Colonial Conference, Mr. Deakin indicated very clearly the drift of colonial ambition. The true patriot can only say that we do not know any other land than the one dear land where we dwell. We are concerned with its well-being and its greatness alone. India must have an empire of its own. It must extend its spiritual conquest all over the world through its political freedom. It may not cast a greedy glance at the opulence of others. Its cupidity may not be excited by the wealth of foreign lands but it claims the right to humanize the civilization of the world by being once more politically predominant. It cannot afford to be the sepulchre of an ancient greatness. It must again feel life in all its limbs. It must again hold aloft a torch of civilization and cannot close with the offer of a twilight which is only of a questionable utility. The ambitions of a great nation need fitting spheres for their honourable, gratification, and such spheres, we may be very sure, will not be found in a third-rate little consultative council, planted in a back room in Westminster waiting for the commands of the Secretary of State.

# 28

## SHALL INDIA BE FREE ?

Sri Aurobindo

### (A) THE LOYALIST GOSPEL

Liberty is the first requisite for the sound health and vigorous life of a nation. A foreign domination is in itself an unnatural condition, and if permitted, must bring about other unhealthy and unnatural conditions in the subject people which will lead to fatal decay and disorganization. Foreign rule cannot build up a nation,—only the resistance to foreign rule can weld the discordant elements of a people into an indivisible unity. When a people, predestined to unity, cannot accomplish its destiny, foreign rule is a provision of Nature by which the necessary compelling pressure is applied to drive its jarring parts into concord. The unnatural condition of foreign rule is brought in for a time in order to cure the previous unnatural condition of insufficient cohesiveness; but this can only be done by the resistance of the subject people; for the incentive to unity given by the alien domination consists precisely in the desire to get rid of it; and if this desire is absent, if the people acquiesce, there can be no force making for unity. Foreign rule was therefore made to be resisted; and to acquiesce in it is to defeat the very intention with which Nature created it.

These considerations are not abstract ideas, but the undeniable teaching of history which is the record of the world's experience. Nationalism takes its stand upon this experience and calls upon the people of India not to allow themselves to fall into the acquiescence in subjection which is the death-sleep of nations,

but to make that use of the alien domination which Nature intended,—to struggle against it and throw it off for unity, for self-realization as an independent national organism. In this country, however, there is a class of wise men who regard the rule of the British bureaucracy as a dispensation of Providence, not only to create unity but to preserve it. They preach therefore a gospel of faith in the foreigner, distrupt of our countrymen and acquiescence in alien rule as a godsend from on high and an indispensable condition for peace and prosperity. Even those whose hearts rebel against a doctrine so servile, are intellectually so much dominated by it that they cannot embrace. Nationalism, with their whole heart and try to arrive at a compromise between subjection and independence,—a halfway house between life and death. Their ingenuity discovers an intermediate condition in which the blessings of freedom will be harmoniously wedded with the blessings of subjection; and to this palace in fairyland they have given the name of Colonial Self-Government. If it were not for the existence of this Moderate opinion and its strange parti-coloured delusions we would not have thought it worthwhile to go back to first principles and show the falsity of the Loyalist gospel of acquiescence. But the Moderate delusion is really a by-product of the Loyalist delusion; and the parent error must be demolished first, before its offspring can be corrected. The Moderates are a hybrid species, emotionally Nationalist, intellectually Loyalist. It is owing to this double nature that their delusions acquire an infinite power for mischief. People listen to them because they claim to be Nationalist and because a sincere Nationalist feeling not infrequently breaks through the false Loyalist reasoning. Moreover, by associating themselves with the Moderates on the same platform the Loyalists are enabled to exercise an influence on public opinion which would otherwise not be accorded to them. The gospel, according to Sir Pherozshah Mehta, would not have such power for harm if it were not allowed to represent itself as one and the same with the gospel according to Mr. Gokhale.

What, then, are the original ideas from which the Loyalist gospel proceeds ? It has a triple foundation of error. First comes the postulate that disunion and weakness are ingrained characteristics of the Indian people and an outside power is necessary in order to arbitrate, to keep the peace and to protect the country from the menace of the mightier nations that ring us in. Proceeding

from this view and supporting it, is the second postulate that there must be an entire levelling down aud sweeping away of all differences; aristocrat and peasant, Brahmin and Sudra, Bengali, Punjabee and Mahratta, all must efface their characteristics and differences before any resistance to foreign domination can be attempted, even if such resistance were desirable. The third postulate is that a healthy development is possible under foreign domination and that this healthy development must be first effected before we can dream of freedom of even of becoming a nation. If these three postulates are granted, then the Loyalist creed is unassailable; if they are proved unsound, not only the Loyalist creed but the standpoint of the Moderates ceases to have any basis of firm ground and becomes a thing in the air. The Nationalist contention is that all these three postulates are monuments of political unreason and have no firm foundation either in historical experience or in the facts we see around us or in the nature of things. They are inconsistent with the fundamental nature of foreign domination; they ignore the experience of all other subject nations; they disregard human nature and the conditions of human development in communities. The Loyalist gospel is as untrue as it is ignoble.

## (B) NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOREIGN RULE

In dealing with the Loyalist creed it will be convenient to examine first the general postulate before we can come to those which apply particularly to the conditions of India. The contention is that a healthy development is possible under foreign domination. In this view national independence is a thing of no moment or at least its importance has been grossly exaggerated. Nations can very well do without it; provided they have a good Government which keeps the people happy and contented and allows them to develop their economic activities and moral virtues, they need not repine at being ruled by others. For certain nations in certain periods of their development liberty would be disastrous and subjection to foreign rule is the most healthy condition. India, argue the Loyalists, is an example of such a nation in such a period. The first business of its people is to develop their commerce, become educated and enlightened, reform their society and their manners and so grow more and more fit for self-government.

In proportion as they become more civilized and more fit, they will receive from their sympathetic, just and discerning rulers an ever-increasing share in the administration of the country until with entire fitness will come entire possession of the status of British citizenship. The idea is that foreign rule is a Providential dispensation or a provision of Nature for training an imperfectly-developed people in the methods of civilization and the arts of self-government. This theory is a modern invention. Ancient and mediaeval Imperialism frankly acknowledged the principle of might is right; the conquerring nation considered that its military superiority was in itself a proof that it was meant to rule and the subject nation to obey; liberty, being denied by Providence to the latter, could not be good for it and there was no call on the ruler to concede it either now or hereafter. This was the spirit in which England conquered and governed Ireland, by the same methods of cynical treachery and ruthless massacre which in modern times are usually considered to be the monopoly of despotisms like Turkey and Russia. But by the time that England had fastened its hold on India, a change had come over the modern world. The Greek ideas of freedom and democracy had penetrated the European mind and created the great impulse of Democratic Nationalism which dominated Europe in the nineteenth century. The idea that despotism of any kind was an offence against humanity, had crystallized into an instinctive feeling, and modern morality and sentiment revolted against the enslavement of nation by nation, of class by class or of man by man. Imperialism had to justify itself to this modern sentiment and could only do so by pretending to be a trustee of liberty, commissioned from on high to civilize the uncivilized and train the untrained until the time had come when the benevolent conqueror had done his work and could unselfishly retire. Such were the professions with which England justified her usurpation of the heritage of the Moghul and dazzled us into acquiescence in servitude by the splendour of her uprightness and generosity. Such was the pretence with which she veiled her annexation of Egypt. These Pharisaic pretensions were especially necessary to British Imperialism because in England the Puritanic middle-class had risen to power and imparted to the English temperament a sanctimonious self-righteousness which refused to indulge in injustice and selfish spoilation except under a cloak of virtue, benevolence and unselfish altruism. The genesis of the

Loyalist gospel can be found in the need of British Imperialism to justify itself to the liberalised sentiment of the nineteenth century and to the Puritanic middle-class element in the British nation.

The question then arises, has this theory any firmer root ? It is anything more than a convenient theory ? Has it any relations with actual facts or with human experience ? To answer this question it is necessary to distinguish between three kinds of liberty, which are generally confused together. There is a national liberty or freedom from foreign control; there is an internal liberty or that freedom from the despotism of an individual, a class or a combination of classes to which the name of self-government is properly given; and there is individual liberty or the freedom of the individual from unnecessary and arbitrary restrictions imposed on him either by the society of which he is a part or by the Government, whether the Government be monarchical, democratic, oligarchic or bureaucratic. The question at issue is then, which, if any, of these three kinds of liberty is essential to the healthy development of national life; or can there be such development without any liberty at all ?

The object of national existence, of the formation of men into groups and their tacit agreement to allow themselves to be ruled by an organized instrument of administration which it called the Government, is nothing else than human development in the individual and in the group. The individual, standing alone, cannot develop; he depends on the support and assistance of the group to which he belongs. The group itself cannot develop unless it has an organization by means of which it not only secures internal peace and order and protection from external attack but also proper conditions which will give free play for the development of its activities and capacities—physical, moral, intellectual, The nation or group is not like the individual who can specialize his development and throw all his energies into one line. The nation must develop military and political greatness and activity, intellectual and aesthetic greatness and activity, commercial greatness and activity, moral sanity and vigour; it cannot sacrifice any of these functions of the organism without making itself unfit for the struggle for life and finally succumbing and perishing under the pressure of more highly organised nations. The purely commercial State like Carthage is broken in the shock with a nation which has developed the military and political as well as

the commercial energies. A purely military State like Sparta cannot stand against rivals which to equal military efficiency unite a greater science, intellectual energy and political ability. A purely aesthetic and intellectual State like the Greek colonies in Italy or a purely moral and spiritual community like the Empire of Peru is blotted out of existence in the clash with ruder but more vigorous and many-sided organisms. No Government, therefore, can really be good for a nation or serve the purposes of national life and development which does not give full scope for the development of all the national activities, capacities and energies. Foreign rule is unnatural and fatal to a nation precisely because by its very nature it throws itself upon these activities and capacities and crushes them down in the interests of its own continued existence. Even when it does not crush them down violently, it obstructs their growth passively by its very presence. The subject nation becomes dependent, disorganized and loses its powers by atrophy. For this reason national independence is absolutely necessary to national growth. There can be no national development without national liberty.

Individual liberty is necessary to national development, because, if the individual is unduly hampered, the richness of national life suffers and is impoverished. If the individual is given free room to realize himself, to perfect, specialize and enrich his particular powers and attain the full height of his manhood, the variety and rapidity of national progress in immensely increased. Insofar as he is fettered and denied scope, the development of the nation is cramped and retarded. A Government which denies scope and liberty to the individual, as all foreign Governments must to a considerable extent deny it, helps to cramp the healthy development of the nation and not to forward it. The development of the individual is and must be an embarrassment to the intruding power, unless the numbers are so few that they can be bribed into acquiescence and support by the receipt of honours, employment or other personal advantages. For development creates ambition and nothing is more fatal to the continuance of foreign rule than the growth of ambitions in the subject race which it cannot satisfy. The action of Lord Curzon in introducing the Universities Act was for the British domination in India an act of inevitable necessity, which had to be done some time or other. Its only defect from the Imperialist point of view was that it came too late.

Just as individual liberty is necessary for the richness and variety of national development, so self-government is necessary for its completeness and the full development of national strength. If certain classes are dominant and others depressed, the result is that the potential strength of the depressed classes is so much valuable force lost to the sum of national strength. The dominant classes may undoubtedly show a splendid development and may make the nation great and famous in history; but when all is said, the strength of the nation is then only the sum of the strength of a few privileged classes. The great weakness of India in the past has been the political depression and nullity of the mass of the population. It was not from the people of India that India was won by Moghul or Briton, but from a small privileged class. On the other hand, the strength and success of the Maharattas and Sikhs in the eighteenth century was due to the policy of Sivaji and Guru Govinda which called the whole nation into the fighting line. They failed only because the Maharattas could not preserve the cohesion which Sivaji gave to their national strength or the Sikhs the discipline which Guru Govinda gave to the Khalsa. It is credible that a foreign rule would either knowingly foster or allow the growth of that universal political consciousness in the subject nation which self-government implies ? It is obvious that foreign rule can only endure so long as political consciousness can be either stifled by violence or hypnotized into inactivity. The moment the nation becomes politically self-conscious, the doom of the alien predominance is sealed. The bureaucracy which rules us, is not only foreign in origin but external to us,—it holds and draws nourishing sustenance for itself from the subject organism by means of tentacles and feelers thrust out from its body thousands of miles away. Its type in natural history is not the parasite, but the octopus. Self-government would mean the removal of the tentacles and the cessation both of the grip and the sustenance. Foreign rule is naturally opposed to the development of the subject nation as a separate organism, to the growth of its capacity for and practice in self-government, to the development of capacity and ambition of its individuals. To think that a foreign rule will deliberately train us for independence or allow us to train ourselves is to suppose a miracle in Nature.

We are arguing the impossibility of a healthy national development under foreign rule,—except by reaction against that

rule. The foreign domination naturally interferes with and obstructs the functioning of the native organs of development. It is therefore in itself an unnatural and unhealthy condition,—a wound, a disease, which must result, unless arrested, in the mortification and rotting to death of the indigenous body politic. If a nation were an artificial product which could be made, then it might be possible for one nation to make another. But a nation cannot be made,—it is an organism which grows under the stress of a principle of life within. We speak indeed of nation-building and of the makers of a nation, but these are only convenient metaphors. The nation-builder, Cavour of Bismarck, is merely the incarnation of a national force which has found its hour and its opportunity,—of an inner will which has awakened under the stress of shaping circumstances. A nation is indeed the outward expression of a community of sentiment, whether it be the sentiment of a common blood or the sentiment of a common religion or the sentiment of a common interest or any or all of these sentiments combined. Once this sentiment grows strong enough to develop into a will towards unity and to conquer obstacles and make full use of favouring circumstances, the development of the nation becomes inevitable and there is no power which can ultimately triumph against it. But the process, however rapid it may be, is one of growth and not of manufacture. The first impulse of the developing nation is to provide itself with a centre, a means of self-expression and united actions, a chief organ or national nerve-centre with subsidiary organs acting under and in harmony with it, if the need of self-protection is its first overpowering need. The organization may be military or semi-military under a single chief or a warlike ruling class; if the pressure from outside is not overpowering or the need of internal development strongly felt, it may take the shape of some form of partial or complete self-government. In either case the community becomes a nation or organic State.

What, then, is the place of foreign rule in such an organic development ? The invasion of the body politic by a foreign element must result either in the merging of the alien into the indigenous nationality or in his superimposition on the latter in a precarious position which can only be maintained by coercion or by hypnotizing the subject people into passivity. If the alien and the native-born population are akin in blood and in religion,

the fusion will be easy. Even if they are not, yet if the former settles down in the conquered country and makes it his motherland, community of interests will in the end inevitably bring about union. The foreigners become sons of the country by adoption and the sentiment of a common motherland is always a sufficient substitute for the sentiment of a common race-origin. The difficulty of religion may be solved by the conversion of the foreigner to the religion of the people he has conquered, as happened with the ancient invaders of India, or by the conversion of the conquered people to the religion of their rulers, as happened in Persia and other countries conquered by the Arabs. Even if no such general change of creed can be effected, yet the two religions may become habituated to each other and mutually tolerant, or the sentiment of a common interest and a common sonhood of one motherland may overcome the consciousness of religious differences. In all these contingencies there is a fusion, complete or partial; and the nation, though it may be profoundly affected for good or evil, need not be disorganized or lose the power of development. India under Mahomedan rule, though greatly disturbed and thrown into continual ferment and revolution, did not lose its power of organic readjustment and development. Even the final anarchy which preceded the British domination, was not a process of disorganization but an actue crisis,—the attempt of Nature to effect an organic readjustment in the body politic.

Unfortunately, the crisis was complicated by the presence and final domination of a foreign body, foreign in blood, foreign in religion, foreign in interest. This body remains superimposed on the native-born population, without any roots in the soil. Its presence, so long as it is neither merged in the nation nor dislodged, must make for the disorganization and decay of the subject people. It is possible for a foreign body differing in blood, religion and interest, to amalgamate with the native organism but only on one of two conditions; either the foreign body must cut itself off from its origin and take up its home in the conquered country,—a course which is obviously impossible in the present problem,—or it must assimilate the subject State into the paramount State by the removal of all differences, inequalities, and conflicting interests. We shall point out the insuperable difficulties in the way of any such arrangement which will at once preserve British supremacy and give a free scope to Indian national

development. At present, there is no likelihood of the intruding force submitting easily to the immense sacrifices which such an assimilation would involve. Yet if no such assimilation takes place, the position of the British bureaucracy in India in no way differs from the position of the Turkish despotism as it existed with regard to the Christian populations of the Balkans previous to their independence or of the Austrians in Lombardy before the Italian Revolution. It is a position which endangers, demoralises and eventually weakens the ruling nation as Austria and Turkey were demoralized and weakened, and which disorganizes and degrades the subject people. A very brief consideration of the effects of British rule in India will carry this truth home.

## (C) UNITY AND BRITISH RULE

It is a common cry in this country that we should effect the unity of its people before we try to be free. There is no cry which is more plausible, none which is more hollow. What is it that we mean when we talk of the necessity of unity ? Unity does not mean uniformity and the removal of all differences. There are some people who talk as if unity in religion, for instance, could not be accomplished except by uniformity. But uniformity of religion is a psychical impossibility forbidden by the very nature of the human mind. So long as men differ in intellect, in temperament, in spiritual development, there must be different religions and different sects of the same religion. The Brahmo Samaj was set on foot in India by Rammohan Roy with the belief that this would be the one religion of India which would replace and unite the innumerable sects now dividing our spiritual consciousness. But in a short time this uniting religion was itself rent into three discordant sects two of which show signs of internal fissure even within their narrow limits; and all these divisions rest not on anything essential but on differences of intellectual constitution, variety of temperament, divergence of the lines of spiritual development. The unity of the Hindu religion cannot be attained by the destruction of the present sects and the substitution of a religion based on the common truths of Hinduism. It can only be effected if there is, first, a common feeling that the sectarian differences are of subordinate importance compared with the community of spiritual truths and discipline as distinct from the spiritual truths

and discipline of other religions, and, secondly, a common agreement in . . . cherishing the Hindu religion in its entirety as a sacred and inalienable possession. This is what fundamentally constitutes the sentiment of unity, whether it be religious, political or social. There must be the sense of a community in something dear and precious which others do not possess; there must be an acute sense of differences from other communities which have no share in our common possession; there must be a supreme determination to cherish, assert and preserve our common possession from disparagement and destruction. But the sentiment of unity is not sufficient to create unity; we require also the practice of unity. Where the sentiment of unity exists and the practice does not, the latter can only be acquired by a common effort to accomplish one great, common and all-absorbing object.

The first question we have to answer is,—can this practical unity be accomplished by acquiescence in foreign rule ? Certainly under foreign rule peculiar kind of uniformity of condition is attained. Brahmin and Sudra, aristocrat and peasant, Hindu and Mahomedan, all are brought to a certain level of equality by equal inferiority to the ruling class. The differences between them are trifling compared with the enormous difference between all of them and the white race at the top. But this uniformity is of no value for the purposes of national unity, except insofar as the sense of a common inferiority excites a common desire to revolt against and get rid of it. If the foreign superiority is acquiesced in, the result is that the mind becomes taken up with the minor differences and instead of getting nearer to unity disunion is exaggerated. This is precisely what has happened in India under British rule. The sentiment of unity has grown, but in practice we are both socially and politically far more disunited and disorganized than before the British occupation. In the anarchy that followed the decline of the Moghul, the struggle was between the peoples of various localities scrambling for the inheritance of Akbar and Shahjahan. This was not a vital and permanent element of disunion. But the present disorganization is internal and therefore more likely to reach the vitals of the community.

This disorganization is the natural and inevitable result of foreign rule. A State which is created by a common descent, real or fictitious, by a common religion or by common interests welding together into one a great number of men or group of men,

is a natural organism which, so long as it exists, has always within it the natural power of revival and development. But as political science has pointed out, a State created by the encampment of a foreign race among a conquered population and supported in the last resort not by any section of the people but by external force, is an inorganic State. The subject population, it has been said, inevitably becomes a disorganized crowd. Consciously or unconsciously the tendency of the intruding body is to break down all the existing organs of national life and to engross all power in itself. The Moghul rule had not this tendency because it immediately naturalised itself in India. British rule has and is bound to have this tendency because it must persist in being an external and intruding presence encamped in the country and not belonging to it. It is doubtful whether there is any example in history of an alien domination which has been so monstrously ubiquitous, inquisitorial and intolerant of any centre of strength in the country other than itself as the British bureaucracy. There were three actual centres of organized strength in pre-British India,—the supreme ruler. Peshwa or Raja or Nawab, reposing his strength on the Zemindars or Jagirdars; the Zemindar in his own domain reposing his strength on his retinue and tenants; and the village community independent and self-existent. The first result of the British occupation was to reduce to a nullity the supreme ruler and this was often done, as in Bengal, by the help of the Zemindars. The next result was the disorganization of the village community. The third was the steady breaking up of the power of the Zemindars with the help of a new class which the foreigners created for their own purposes,—the bourgeois or middle class. Unfortunately for the British bureaucracy it had, in order to get the support and assistance of the middle class, to pamper the latter and allow it to grow into a strength and develop organs of its own, such as the Press, the Bar, the University, the Municipalities, District Boards, etc. Finally, the situation with which British statesmen had to deal was this;—the natural sovereigns of the land helpless and disorganized, the landed aristocracy helpless and disorganized, the peasantry helpless and disorganized, but a middle class growing in strength, pretensions and organization. British statesmanship, following the instinctive and inevitable trend of an alien domination, set about breaking down the power it had established in order to destroy the sole remaining centre of

national strength and possible revival. If this could be done, if the middle class could be either tamed, bribed or limited in its expansion, the disorganization would be complete. Nothing would be left of the people of India except a disorganized crowd with no centre of strength or means of resistance.

It was in Bengal that the middle class was most developed and self-conscious; and it was in Bengal therefore that a quick succession of shrewd and dangerous blows was dealt at the once useful but now obnoxious class. The last effort to bribe it into quietude was the administration of Lord Ripon. It was now sought to cripple the organs through which this strength was beginning slowly to feel and develop its organic life. The Press was intimidated, the Municipalities officialized, the University officialized and its expansion limited. Finally, the Partition sought with one blow to kill the poor remnants of the Zemindar's power and influence and to weaken the middle class of Bengal by dividing it. The suppression of the middle class was the recognized policy of Lord Curzon. After Mr. Morley came to power, it was, we believe, intended to recognize and officialize the Congress itself if possible. Even now it is quite conceivable in view of the upheaval in Bengal and the Punjab, that an expanded Legislature with the appearance of a representative body but the reality of official control may be given, not as a concession but as a tactical move. The organs of middle class political life can only be dangerous so long as they are independent. By taking away their independence they become fresh sources of strength for the Government,—of weakness for the class which strives to find in them its growth and self-expression.

The Partition opened the eyes of the threatened class to the nature of the attack that was being made on it; and the result was a widespread and passionate revolt which has now spread from Bengal to the Punjab and threatens to break out all over India. The struggle is now a struggle for life and death. If the bureaucracy conquers, the middle class will be broken, shattered, perhaps blotted out of existence; if the middle class conquers, the bureaucracy are not for long in the land. Everything depends on the success of failure of the middle class in getting the people to follow it for a common salvation. They may get this support by taking their natural place as awakeners and leaders of the nation; they may get it by the energy and success with which they wage

their battle with the bureaucracy. In Eastern Bengal, for instance, the aid of a few Mahomedan aristocrats has enabled the bureaucracy to turn a large section of the Mahomedan masses against the Hindu middle class; and the educated community is fighting with its back to the wall for its very existence. If it succeeds under such desperate circumstances, even the Mahomedan masses will eventually follow its leading.

This process of political disorganization is not so much a deliberate policy on the foreign bureaucracy, as an instinctive action which it can no more help than the sea can help flowing. The dissolution of the subject organization into a disorganized crowd is the inevitable working of an alien despotism.

# 29

## INDIAN RESURGENCE AND EUROPE

SRI AUROBINDO

In many of the European countries in which democracy is at present not fully developed, the monarchy and the people are still in a position of armed neutrality with regard to each other. The people look with distrust on the ruler, the ruler with fear and antipathy on the people. If the ruler takes a step in the direction of absolutism, the bomb is ready in the hands of the people to put an end to his life. If the people seem to be inclined towards Republicanism or Socialism, the whole energies of the ruler are bent towards the discovery of some means by which the tide of democracy can be kept in check or turned back. When we look to democratic countries, we find a similar attitude between capital and labour, property and poverty. Distrust is the atmosphere of modern politics, mutual suspicion and hatred the secret spring of action. Under the fair outside of its material civilization, a deep-seated moral disease is at work eating into the vitals of European society of which a thousand symptoms strike the eye, from the extreme of bomb-throwing Anarchism to the other extreme of Tolstoy's Utopianism. Is India to be infected with the disease ? The present conditions of Government in this country are full of the germs of the Occidential malady, and if India is to escape from it, it must be, first, by getting rid of these conditions and, secondly, by seeking refuge in its own superior civilization. The work of Nationalism is therefore two-fold. It has to win Swaraj for India so that the present unhealthy conditions of political life,

full of the germs of the social and political phthisis which is overtaking Europe, may be entirely and radically cured, and it has to ensure that the Swaraj it brings about shall be a Swadeshi Swaraj and not an importation of the European article. It is for this reason that the movement for Swaraj found its first expression in an outburst of Swadeshi sentiment which directed itself not merely against foreign goods, but against foreign habits, foreign dress and members, foreign education, and sought to bring the people back to their own civilization. It was the instinctive protest of Nature against the malady that was eating its way into the national system and threatening to corrupt its blood and disturb the soundness of its organs. If there were some irrational features in the revolt of the people against foreign things, it was the violence of the malady which necessitated the violence of the reaction. The late Upadhyay was the type and champion of this feature of the National movement. He was never weary of harping on the necessity of stripping from ourselves every rag of borrowed European thought and habits and becoming intensely, uncompromisingly Indian. When we put aside all the mannerisms of that strong personality and seek its kernel, we find that this was his message and the meaning of his life. After himself going through all the phases of Europeanised thought and religion, he returned like his country with a violent rebound to the religion, the thoughts, the habits and the speech of his forefathers. It is the spirit of old Bengal which incarned itself in him, with the strength, courage, passionate adherence to conviction which was the temperament of old Bengal and which modern Bengal had for a period lost. His declaration in Court and his death put a seal upon the meaning of his life and left his name stamped indelibly on the pages of history, as a saint and martyr of the new faith. It washed out all human weakness and impurity with the wave of a great spiritual act of devotion and renunciation and left the soul of the man only for posterity to cherish. We have to take up his work and incorporate the essence of it into the accomplished heritage of the nation.

The return to ourselves is the cardinal feature of the national movement. It is national not only in the sense of political self-assertion against the domination of foreigners, but in the sense of a return upon our old national individuality. It is significant that all those who are out of touch with this feature of the movement,

are losing their position at its head, while those who keep in its forefront are being more and more suffused with the spirit of "Indianity" and overcome with the spell of India, the magic of her thought and civilization, the over-powering touch of her religion. The highest qualities of head and heart cannot keep the lead for men who have not the saving grace of openness to this passion for India as she was, is and will be. On the other hand, men perhaps of inferior calibre are likely to do better work for the country, who have the power to respond. The secret of this peculiar feature of the movement is to be found in its essential nature and in the purpose which God intends it to serve. If India follows in the footsteps of Europe, accepts her political ideals, social system, economic principles, she will be overcome with the same maladies. Such a consummation is neither for the good of India nor for the good of India. If India becomes an inttellectual province of Europe, she will never attain to her natural greatness or fulfil the possibilities within her. *Paradharma bhayavahah*, to except the *dharma* of another is perilous; it deprives the man or the nation of its secret of life and vitality and substitutes an unnatural and stunted growth for the free, large and organic development of nature. Whenever a nation has given up the purpose of its existence, it has been at the cost of its growth. India must remain India if she is to fulfil her destiny. Nor will Europe profit by governing her civilization on India, for if India, who is the distinct physician of Europe's maladies, herself fails into the clutch of the disease, the disease will remain uncured and incurable and European civilization will perish as it perished when Rome declined, first by dry rot within itself and last by irruption from without. The success of the National movement, both as a political and as a spiritual movement, is necessary for India and still more necessary for Europe. The whole world is interested in seeing that India becomes free so that India may become herself.

# 30

## GOVERNMENT BY OBSCURANTISM

SRI AUROBINDO

Nothing could prove better, not even the judgments of Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, nor the Kitchener-dictated deportation of the Punjab patriots, the hopelessly retrograd character of the present absolutism in this country than the elimination of the History of England from the curriculum for the Entrance Standard prescribed by the Calcutta University. For some-time past there has been a good deal of insistence by men calling themselves English on the injurious effect producted on the youth-ful minds of the Indian students by tbe study of Mill, Macaulay, Spencer and other writers on Political Phylosophy. These men possess no better powers of appreciating the thoughts and deeds that have won their country the world's respect, than can the signatories to the loyalist manifesto understand the secret of India's greatness and the necessity of restoring her to her pristine primacy amongst the nations of the East and West. They tremble to see an Indian reading the *Representative Government*, because the study of it, they know, leads to the enfranchisement of the intellect, the unfettering of the will, and begets a reasoned conviction of the supreme value and necessity of freedom. And no doubt it is men of such calibre and temperament who have ruled English History of the Schools of Bengal. The one incessant attempt of Englishmen in this country is to forget that they are Englishmen, that they have had anything to do with a country the purpose of whose history has been the increasing realization of its people's equality and

freedom. They only like to think and remember that they are the conquerors of India, and set a special store by that part of the Bible which enjoins on men to render upto Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Their vision of life is bounded by the dream of an India remaining contented in prepetual bondage, and hence their chagrin and their fear at the sight of books that inculcate the primary necessity, the indispensability, of liberty. The message of popular freedom jars on their ears; they are sickeningly full of the cant about the failure of democracy. They do not, as a rule, like to go back to their country permanently, the atmosphere of equal liberty for all chokes them, they hate the common people in England, they will frankly tell you, they are so impertinent, you know. The division of ruler and ruled, the enjoyment of privileges and immunities is the very breath of their life; any gloat over the delicious thought of being in undisturbed possession of monopolies that shall remain for ever theirs, of having servants whom they can insolently order about, of having eternally at their disposal the thousand and one resources of a country of 300 million people who shall be subservient to their will. Those Anglo-Indians who go back home to settle down there for the rest of their life, find it impossible to live the ordinary life of Englishmen and Englishwomen, the humanity of the everyday life of England repels them. Nor are they liked by their own countrymen. Their haughtiness, intolerance, indolence revolts the feelings of one and all; people refuse to mix with them; servants refuse to serve them, and hence retired Anglo-Indians have to live in their native country in special colonies of their own, away from the current of the nation's life. Their main talk is about the horses and carriages and the servants they had in India, the number of Indians they had gratuitously insulted, and the many clubs to which they had belonged. The people of England look upon them with a distant interest, as those who had done England's dirty work in India which certainly evokes their sense of gratitude, but at the same time impels them to have little to do with them socially. Professor Tait once told an eminent Indian that the presence of Anglo-Indians was a threat to the future of England, for with their numbers on the increase a time would certainly arrive, he thought, when they would begin to infect the English people with their distorted ideas of life.

We do not for a moment mean to convey the impression to our readers that these are not people in England who are as strenuous and uncompromising upholders of England's overlordship in India as the Anglo-Indians themselves. But the actual enjoyment of despotic power for a long-term of years so deadens the humanity of the average Englishmen in India that even those in England who believe in the justice of their countrymen ruling Indians despotically, instinctively recoil from the returned Anglo-Indian as an unthinkable perversion of what was once an Englishman. There must necessarily be a world of difference between a man who might have been a despot and a man who is actually one.

This brings us naturally to the question as to who are interested in the perpetuation of the English absolutism here. Mainly speaking, it is the middle class in England, upper, middle and lower. The upper middle class finds in India a ready field for its capital, and the middle a dumping ground for the disposal of its increasing superfluities, the boys, and the lower middle a land of wealth and highly remunerative employment where they can play the "gentlemen." The great labouring class, the main mass of the people, have little or no interest in the maintenance on severance of England's connexion with India, for they have to gain infinitely more from employment at home and in the various trades with foreign countries than from the miserably little commerce England has with her Dependency. We shall revert to this important subject in detail on another occasion.

It is these people against whom educated India must fight her way up—the Anglo-Indians with their grossly undemocratic view of life, backed up by the philistinism of the whole of England's middle class who happen to possess almost all the political powers in their country at the present day, and can yet rouse up the masses to face a various death on the field of battle by the clever and unscrupulous employment, through the medium of its subsidised platform and Press, of such catchwords as "patriotism", "the Mission of Empire", "the honour of the country" which rendered into plain language mean "more money for the middle class." And this dominant section of the English people seems determined on keeping India in its present condition as an object of unending exploitation, whose sole use in the world is to fill the pockets of Englishmen.

The Swadeshi-Boycott movement threatens this pious aspiration of the English middle class with speedy annihilation. And Anglo-India, the agent and trusted servant of that particular class in England, with her soul completely steeled against all consideration of humanity by the long, continuous and incontinent indulgence in the exercise of irresponsible authority, is bent on treading underfoot everything that tends to elevate the human mind to the thought and realization of its own dignity, to the appreciation of national autonomy as an essential requisite of life. She has therefore to confess herself ashamed of the history of her own people which she has not the courage or the strength to allow the Indians to study any longer. The self-devotion of the leaders of the popular movement in India reminds her perhaps a little too unpleasantly of the days of Hampden and Elliot, and in nervous dread she shuts the dreadful book whose pages glow with the praise of these men and present them as examples before mankind. She is haunted by the spirits of England's dead past, and is almost afraid of their reincarnating on the Indian soil. Along with Nationalist preachers and papers, the History of England must also go.

Too late, alas ! India has risen for ever from her slavery-sleep; she has grasped the full meaning of liberty, and is resolved on having it at any cost. By trying to shut the people out of all those avenues of thought that point to liberty as the beacon-light of man's progress, you simply intensify the intolerance of autocracy which is now the sole preoccupation of the Indian mind. We welcome this following out of your country's history; it will only help to swell the number of students who are daily seeking admittance into the institutions of National Education; it will enable them to become national in extent as they are now so in aim and method. You will never be strong enough to stamp out the National Education movement in our country. And even could bureaucratic guggling shut us out from the study of European history, we have learned what we had to learn from it, and that which is ours, you cannot take from us, the capacity for utter self-abnegation and self-immolation which is of the soil and not borrowed from the West, and which will now be poured with all the grandiose virility of old no longer merely into the pursuit of individual salvation but into the service and salvation of the Motherland.

# 31

## LEWD-TONGUED IMPERIALISM AND SOULLESSNESS

SRI AUROBINDO

The inhumanity of the imperialism which has found its apostle in the *Times* is seen in its worst and ugliest from in the letter which that journal publishes in its issue of 13th September from its correspondent at Dacca. There is necessarily something godless and anti-human in a creed that aims at the dateless perpetuation of the arbitrary sway of one-people over another. Constant thoughts of how to forge the fetters enduringly round the hands and feet of a nation, so that it may be held helplessly to the ground and be sucked dry of all its life-blood, must gradually brutalise the human heart, and habituate it to a greedy vampirism that is bound, in its turn, to kill out one by one all those finer sentiments and considerations constituting the essence of what we mean by civilization. The *Times* and its allies are already betraying the unmistakable signs of such a complete dehumanisation. A selfish and mercenary lust for the permanent possession of India under England's irresponsible control, so that she may remain for as long as the imagination can travel into the future secure field for the Britisher to domineer and exploit to his heart's content and just as he pleases, seems to have finally robbed this champion of Government without consent of the governed of the last vestige of the sense of honour, of all respect for humanity, of the least suspicion of a reverence for truth.

For sometime past its columns have been disgraced by the

most foul suggestions and insinuations against Indian character, especially against the character of the Bengalees who have perhaps been showing a more unconquerable determination to bring its pretences to the ground than their countrymen in the other parts of the country. Finding itself increasingly baffled by the growing vigour and vitality of the Nationalist movement in Bengal, it has entered upon a deliberate campaign of lies and libels against the inhabitants of the Province. Its object is to trade upon the ignorance that prevails generally outside India, with regard to matters Indian, and wear away from us by all sorts of misrepresentations that sympathy of the civilized world which the movement started in Bengal has already begun to attract.

We have left it so long severely alone with its daily glut of falsehood and fabrication. But it has been going on from bad to worse, and has now become sacrilegious and profane. Utterly confuted in its favourite theory of moral incapacity as an inherent failing of the Bengalee character, by the self-devotion of our workers who have demonstrated to a certainty the moral superiority of the National movement in Bengal to the alien bureaucracy that rules over the country, the *Times* has now laid desecrating hands upon the sanctity of our inner life. Frustrated in its lying criticism of our men, it has now turned to a shameless and brutal attack on our women. Heroism indeed! Worthy of the workers in the sacred cause of Empire. This one brave act of the *Times* reveals in a flash the true inwardness of the imperialism that it so, strenuously advocates. It publishes a correspondence from its emissary at Dacca to the effect that 'a small number of young Hindu widows (at Jamalpur) willingly acceded to abduction, to escape the degradation to which their own creed subjects them. It is a vile and wanton lie as well as gross profanity. To talk of degradation and immorality in connection with Hindu widowhood shows as great a defect in sensibility and noble perception, indeed we may say, as depraved a strain of impiety as to commit sacrilege in a Church. Marriage is not with us Indians a mere union of the flesh; for us it is a sacred and enduring union of the spirit. Marriage in the eye of the Hindu is the necessary, predestined union of man and woman through the medium of which they are to work out their joint salvation from the bondage of birth, their emancipation into the Divine. The length of it is not to be measured by the span of one short mortal life; it reaches beyond

life, through death, on to the last birth in the cycle of existence. How can then the death of the husband under the Hindu widow's union with his spirit ? She and he are one to eternity. She is passionately alive to her comradeship, to her share of responsibility, in the work that devolves on both to work conjointly their deliverance into Divinity. This is the psychology of Indian widowhood. No doubt, the native of a country where a widow is pursued by hungry suitors before she has off her weeds, where she is not unoften remarried before the grass is green over the spot where her husband lies buried, is an utter stranger to the intense spirituality of widow-life in this country. To her remarriage is as natural as marriage, for to her marriage is a mere legalised means of satisfying the sex-instinct; to us it is the initiation in life into immortality. The feeling with which the Indian looks on the widow is far other than that of the Englishman. To him the widow is an embodied religion, an object of instinctive reverence. She is the bearer to men of the glad tidings of human immortality —on her calm and subdued countenance, purified and illumined by the habit of abnegation and selfless service to all, is the surest guarantee of the kinship and continuity of the dead with the living. She is loved, respected, adored by all. It is a lie to say, we repeat, that she is subject to any degradation in her society. Of all the manifestations of profanity to which the *Times* has flung its columns open, none has been so tainted with godless cowardice and brutality as the letter of its Dacca correspondent.

The same cowardly malignity of the *Times* correspondent comes to the surface again in the columns of the *Englishman* today. One touch of imperialism makes the two papers kin. In its desperate effort to mislead the English labour-leader who is going back home after a first-hand study of the actual situation in Bengal, it drops athwart his path the same monstrous lie, the same abominable imputation of the libeller in the *Times* against the few unfortunate, grossly wronged Hindu widows of Jamalpur in particular, and against Hindu widows and Hindu Society in general. The *Times* and the *Englishman* are only doomed to discomfiture. Nothing can be saved by a lie, not even the Empire of which these rank exponents of imperialism dream : for one lie cannot be sustained by another. We, on our part, would rather welcome, these vile tactics of our enemies; the more they lay bare the innate grossness and ugliness of their object and method, the more will

they throw into relief the sacredness and the loftiness of our aspirations and endeavours; the more will our people, even the whole world, loathe and shrink from them, and join and journey with us.

# 32

## THE MESSAGE OF INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO

The ground gained by the Vedantic propaganda in the West, may be measured by the growing insight in the occasional utterances of well-informed and intellectual Europeans on the subject. A certain Mrs. Leighton Cleather speaking to the Oriental circle of the Lyceum Club in London on the message of India has indicated the mission of India with great justness and insight. We need not follow Mrs. Cleather into her dissertation on the Kshatriyas, whom for some mysterious reason she insists on calling the Red Rajputs, but it is true that the first knowledge of Vedantic truth and the Rajayoga was the possession of the Kshatriyas till Janaka, Ajatashatru and others gave it to the Brahmins. But the real issues of this historical fact are inevitably missed by the lecturer. She is on a surer ground when she continues, "India's message to the world today she considered to be the realisation of the life beyond material forms. The East has taken for granted the reality of the invisible and has no fear. The recognition of the soul in ourselves and others leans to the recognition of the universal soul and the great word of the Upanishads : 'This soul which is the self of all that is, this the real, this the self, that thou art.' Modern civilisation has lost sight of the fundamental law of self-sacrifice as conditioning man's evolution."

We have here, very briefly put, the triple message of India, psychical, spiritual and moral. India believes in and has the key to a psychical world within man and without him which is the

source and basis of the material. This it is which Europe is beginning dimly to discover. She has caught glimpses of the world beyond the gates, her hands are fumbling for the key, but she has not yet found it. Immortality proved and admitted, it becomes easier to believe in God. The spiritual message is that the universal self is one and that our souls are not only brothers, not only of one substance and nature, but live in and move towards an essential oneness. It follows that Love is the highest law and that to which evolution must move. *Ananda*, joy and delight, are the object of the *lila* and the fulfilment of love is the height of joy and delight. Self-sacrifice is therefore the fundamental law. Sacrifice, says the *Gita*, is the law by which the Father of all in the beginning conditioned the world, and all ethics, all conduct, all life is a sacrifice willed or unconscious. The beginning of ethical knowledge is to realise this and make the conscious sacrifice of one's own individual desires. It is an inferior and semi-savage morality which gives up only to gain and makes selfishness the basis of ethics. To give up one's small individual self and find the larger self in others, in the nation, in humanity, in God, that is the law of Vedanta. That is India's message. Only she must not be content with sending it, she must rise up and live it before all the world so that it may be proved a possible law of conduct both for men and nations.

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## ENGLAND : THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Sri Aurobindo

### THE BUDGET

It is curious that England which was, a little while ago, the most conservative and individualistic of nations, the least forward in the race towards socialism, should now be the foremost. The socialistic Radical, the forerunner of insurgent Leviathan, is in the cabinet and has framed a Budget. The Budget is the pivot on which English progress has turned from the beginning. The power of the purse in the hands of the Commons has been the chief lever for the gradual creation of a limited democracy. The same power is now being used for the gradual introduction of a modified socialism, and, by a curious provision of Fate, seems destined to be also the occasion for the final destruction of one at least of the two remaining restrictions on democracy, the veto of the Lords and the limitation of the suffrage. The Lords were bound to oppose the Budget, for the triumph of socialism means the destruction of aristocracy. The Lords, therefore, have either to fight or to fall; and the pathos of their situation is that, in all probability, the choice is not their and that, whether they fight or not, they cannot but fall. The Lords have only continued to exist because they were discreet enough to lie low and give a minimum of trouble. As for the limitation of the suffrage, it is not at all unlikely that the daring and unscrupulous campaign of the suffragettes may end in the concession of universal suffrage. For if women are given the

vote, the proletariate will not be content to remain without it. They too can lift crowbars and hammers and break glass roofs !

## THE GREAT ELECTION

It is not often that we are to dwell at length on the incidents of English politics in which, as a rule, India is not concerned nor affected by the results. A Brodric to a Hamilton, a Morley to a Brodric succeeds, and the sublime continuity of British policy, continuous in nothing else but this one determination to maintain absolutism in India, takes care that India shall have no reason to interest herself in Imperial affairs. The present crisis in England, however, is so momentous and its results so incalculable that it is impossible to say that India will not be affected by its gigantic issues. The importance of the election turns not upon the issues of the Budget, though these are of no small magnitude, but upon the great constitutional question of the House of Lords and its veto. The veto of the House of Lords is the drag on the Parliamentary locomotive. It is the one obstacle that stands between England and a peaceful revolution. It is true that this veto has been exercised very sparingly and only when the Liberals have introduced measures of a revolutionary character or containing clauses which meant a too rapid subversion of ancient landmarks and safeguards; but this is precisely the use in British Constitution of the otherwise useless, ineffective and somnolent upper House. It has used the veto if not with perfect wisdom, yet with a moderation and eye to its own safety that betokened at least a perfect discretion. Inspite of this reserve the obstruction offered by the Lords to liberal measures and their complacent acceptance of conservative legislation has become more and more exasperating to the Liberal party and has often threatened a collision which was averted either by the submission of the Lords or the support of its obstructive policy by the electors at the polls. So long as the social preponderance of the aristocracy and the possession of the land and wealth, on which that preponderance rested was not touched, the Lords have submitted to the gradual loss of political preponderance and the slow advance of England from an aristocratic to a middle class rule and even from a middle class rule to a limited democracy limited by the existence of the Lords themselves and the restriction of the franchise. A new

force, a fatal solvent of established institutions has entered European politics with the steady slow irresistible advance of socialism, and England, long exempt from the working of this great tide of idealistic thought, is being more and more swiftly undermined, its cherished ideals sapped, its administrative and social structure threatened by the wash of the advancing waters. The uneasiness engendered in the more richly propertied classes by this advance of the destroyer has come to a head as a result of the provisions of the Budget by which the land, emblem and guarantee of English conservatism of the inviolability of private property and the survival of the old world society in its most vital features has been subjected to substantial taxation. The innovation creates a probability of continual nibbling until under the impulse of a growing Socialism, land is nationalised its proprietors bought out, and aristocracy destroyed. The Lords have either to resist the process in its first step or make up their minds to gradual extinction.

The question for the upper House is how they will resist. It is open to them either to reject the Budget altogether—a measure of too drastic severity,—to throw the land clauses,—a device which will expose the Pens to the charge of violating the unwritten Constitution for the selfish purpose of saving their own pockets and throwing the burden of taxation on the middle class and the working men, or to amend the Budget so as to lighten the land taxes and deprive them of their more inoffensive features. The last device has the disadvantage of being no more than a palliative, while it amounts to as serious a breach of the financial privilege of the House of Commons as the others. The omens point to a rejection of the bill by the Peers, but we doubt whether they will care to incur the odium of so disturbing the finances of the country. In all probability they will amend and leave to the Ministry the responsibility of dissolving the Parliament with no Budget sanctioned and the insecurity to the tax-payers resulting from this unprecedented and anomalous situation. The burden of choice will then fall upon the Commons, who must either submit to the destruction of the first and most essential safeguard of popular liberty in England, the popular control of taxation and the Exchequer, or take up the challenge given by the Peers. The first course is unthinkable. No Liberal Ministry especially, would care to go down to posterity as having betrayed the people of England

and the future democracy by such a sacrifice of the palladium of British liberty. Mr. Asquith may either dissolve as soon as the Lords refuse to withdraw their amendments or he may ask the King to create a number of Liberal Peers large enough to swamp the Conservative majority in the Lords, or he may at once bring in a bill for the limitation of the veto of the Upper House and dissolve upon it so as to raise definitely the question of the veto as the one real issue before the electors. The first course has this great disadvantage, the real issues may be covered over by the clamour of the Conservative party against the socialistic trend of the new taxation and by the cry of the Tariff Reform. By dint of repeated iteration the Conservatives have created an impression in many minds that the present Ministry is deeply tinged with Socialism and the Budget a deliberate attack on property. The effect this cry is having on the mind of the wealthier classes is shown by the number of defections in the Liberal ranks,—not so many, however, as might have been expected,—and the diminution of the Liberal vote at the bye-elections. The Budgets open the door to socialism, but is in none of its provisions socialistic, the only real novelty of importance being the land taxes which have their counterpart in countries the reverse of socialistic. The Ministry is itself a curious conglomeration of Moderates, Radicals, and extreme Radicals, but there is not a single socialist in its ranks and many of its members are avowedly anti-socialistic in their temper and opinions. Nevertheless, the cry is having its effect on the susceptible British elector and, unless it is met, will imperil a great number of Liberal seats. The cry of Tariff Reform has its charm for a certain number of working men, but is not in itself so formidable as the catchword of Property in Danger. To dissolve upon the rejection of the Budget will have the effect of preventing a clear issue from being raised and confusing the public mind by the entanglement of three separate questions, Socialism, and the Budget, Free Trade or Tariff Reform, and the veto of the House of Lords. The Ministry have everything to lose; the Opposition everything to gain by this confusion of issues.

The second device is being urged upon the Prime Minister by some of its supporters who are rather shortsighted politicians than men with the outlook of the statesman. The temporary difficulty would no doubt be surmounted, but it is a matter of unfailing experience that Liberal Peers so created gravitate in a very short

time to Conservation. If these Peers had to be actually created, the Liberal Ministry would very soon be face to face again with a similar situation, and drastic remedy of doubling the bulk of the House of Lords could not be repeated ad infinitum. On the other hand, if the Peers yielded in order to avoid so great an indignity to their rank and order, they would do so under the most rigorous compulsion and be all the more eager to hamper and distress their victors in less vital matters. Mr. Asquith would avoid a particular difficulty, but only to perpetuate the great stumbling block of all Liberal Ministers, a permanently Conservative Upper House. On the other hand he has a chance, if he boldly seizes on this issue, of avoiding a fight on the weaker points of the Budget, of forcing to the forefront a great constitutional issue in which everything liberal or even truly conservative in England ought to be on his side, and destroying at one blow and forever this perpetual thorn in the side of Liberalism and obstacle to radical Legislation.

The drastic device of swamping the Lords with newly created Liberal Peers will be too much needed shortly to be thrown away now. When in the new Parliament, the bill for the limitation of the Peers' veto has been carried through the Commons, it will have to be carried through the Lords as well as before it can receive the King's sanction and become law, and, since the Lords as they are will not consent to their own nullification, it is only by the swamping device that this great resolution can be effected. The only question is whether the bill should be brought in before or postponed till after the election. To bring in the bill before, pass it formally through the Commons without permitting much debate and immediately dissolve for a mandate from the country, would be boldest but also the best policy for Ministers. It would definitely raise the question as the one issue of the election and, if confined to the limitation and not the destruction of the veto,—so as to avoid the charge of destroying the constitution,—would rally the whole force of Liberalism behind Mr. Asquith. We do not know whether the course has suggested itself to the tactations of the party, but it seems to us that it gives the only chance of a really effective and victorious electioneering campaign.

With all this, what are the chances of a Liberal victory ? Very small, unless the Labour-Socialist vote is conciliated. The great feature of the recent bye-elections has been the repeated splitting of the democratic vote between Labourite and Liberal, the

## THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

The note of revolution which was struck with resounding force by Mr. Llyod George and Mr. Winston Churchill in the quarrel with the Lords, is now ringing louder in England and has been taken up in soberer but not less emphatic tones by Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey. There can be no doubt that there was dissension in the Cabinet over the Budget and that concessions made by the Government in the process of the passing it were forced upon Mr. Llyod George and certainly not to the taste of that fiery and uncompromising Celt. But the reactionary attempt of the House of Lords to control finance, has evidently closed up the ranks by driving the Moderate over to the cause of revolution. It is evidently felt by the Liberals that, with an Upper Chamber more and more shamelessly and constantly a mere tool of the Conservative leaders, it is impossible for any Liberal Government to accept office unless it has a mandate to end or mend the Lords. We cannot believe that a similar feeling will not actuate the great mass of Liberals all over Great Britain and heal all differences. Already the Labour Executive has decided to make the victory easier for the Government by not dividing the forward vote in a considerable number of constituencies and we have no doubt this is the outward sign of a secret compact between the Labour Party and the Liberals by which the return of a powerful Socialist Party has been secured. Even thc extreme Socialists who usually are against all dealing with the middle class and whose motto is "A plague on both your houses," are calling on the Socialists of all shades to support the Government in abolishing the House of Lords. If Mr. Asquith had followed the line we suggested as possible in a previous number and introduced a moderate but effective bill for nullifying that Lord's veto, he would certainly have gained a number of Moderate votes. which will now be denied to him, but it is doubtful whether the gain of the entire Socialist vote, secured by keeping himself free to end the House of Lord's is not, in the present condition of English politics, a compensation far exceeding the loss. Already Tariff Reform is receding into the background and promises to be a subordinate issue. The battle is over the constitutional, not the fiscal issue. By their anxiety to bring the Unionist Labour candidates into the field and the eager talk of Conservative leaders about the necessity

of reforming the Lords, the party of reaction show that they perfectly understand from what quarters disaster threatens. Now that the Liberal party is pledged to destroy the Lords' veto, the English Revolution is assured and it will be not a middle class but a Socialist and Labour revolution. This result is assured whether the Liberals win or lose in the present battle. One campaign does not decide the fortune of such a war.

## ARISTOCRATIC QUIBBLING

When was speculated that the Lords would be more likely to amend the Budget and leave their opponents the onus of throwing the finances of the whole country into confusion, we underestimated the want of wit of which this highly venerable but somewhat brainless house is capable. This want of wit has shown itself in an unseasonable and wholly futile excess of refined cunning. The House of Lords felt that its great weakness when its conduct went before the country for its verdict, would be the odium of its unconstitutional attempt to interfere with the control of the finances by the people. To mend the unconstitutional appearance of their act, they have taken up this position, that they have no right to amend but they have the right to reject the Budget. It appears to be a right which they have sometimes been unwise enough to claim, but never unwise enough to enforce. The aristocratic hair-splitter who discovered this quibble, seems to have forgotten that, however pleasing the distinction may be to this ingenuity, the mass of the voters will not care one straw to examine fine distinctions which claim the whole and disclaim the part. They will simply say that the right of rejection means the right of baffling the representatives of the people and paralysing finance. The other device of the Lords is to avoid the appearance of disputing the people's right by putting the rejection in the form of a referendum to the people, a procedure which the British constitution does not include in itself and which is entirely new. Unfortunately they have made too much noise about the woes of the Dukes and Mr. Balfour has made the damaging admission that it is only the liquor and the land clauses to which he objects, so that it is too late to pretend that it is anxiety for the liberties of the people and not solicitude for their own pockets and the pockets of their allies the publicans that has dictated their action.

The indecent crowding of Lords who never before attended a single sitting, to reject the Budget was, also a tactical error. On the whole, the action of the House of Lords has greatly helped Mr. Asquith and we may await with some confidence the result of a struggle in which India is deeply interested.

## THE ELECTIONS

The elections at the time of writing seem to point to the return of a Liberal Ministry dependent first on Labour, then on Irish votes for its very existence. At the end of last week after being long in a slight minority, the combined Liberal-Labour party exceeded the Conservatives by 14, but the Liberal vote, apart from the Labour representatives was still well behind the Unionist numbers. The vicissitudes of this crisis have been utterly unlike those of any previous election. Instead of an even ebb and flow such as we find on former occasions, well-distributed all over the country, we see the United Kingdom ranged into two adverse parties on a great revolutionary issue, according to geographical, almost racial distribution. Wales, Scotland and the North are for the new age, the Centre and South for the past. In the Southern, Midland and Eastern Countries the Unionists have achieved a tremendous victory and we think there is hardly a constituency in which the Liberal majority has not been either materially, often hugely reduced or turned into a minority.

In the North, even in Yorkshire, still more in Westmoreland, the Unionists have achieved a few victories, but the verdict of the North as a whole has gone heavily against the Lords and for the Liberals. Wales is still overwhelmingly Radical inspite of one or two Conservative gains. In Scotland, the Liberal party has been amazingly successful and increased its majority in many places, maintained them in most and balanced occasional losses by compensating victories. The "Celt" everywhere has declared for revolution, as was to be expected, from that ardent, noble and imaginative race; the frank, adventurous Scandinavian blood of the North may account for its progressive sympathies; but the rest of England is the home of the Conservative, slow-natured Anglo-Saxon always distrustful of new adventures and daring innovations. The struggle seems to us to have been not so much one of opinions as of blood and instinct. It is notable that the

Conservative victories have been attained not so much by the reduction and transference of the Liberal vote as by a rush of Conservative electors to the polls who did not vote in previous elections. The unparalleled heaviness of the polling shows how deeply the people have been stirred and feel the magnitude and importance of the issue.

## THE ELECTIONS

The great election is over the first in England which has been fought on constitutional issues since the passing of the Reform Bill in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. The forces of reaction have put forth their utmost strength and, in the result, have only succeeded in just equalising their own numbers with those of the official Liberal Party. This partial success will be more fatal to the cause of reaction than a defeat. For, in the coming Parliament, the Liberal Ministry will be dependent for their very existence on the forty Labour votes that represent the frankly socialistic element in English progressive opinion. Such a state of things has never before existed in English politics and a few years ago it would have been thought impossible. Practically, Socialist opinion will rule England so long as the Asquith Ministry lasts and, if the socialists are wisely guided and refrain from abusing their opportunity, they will be able to take such steps in the modification of British politics as will ensure the triumph of Socialism in England at no distant date. Not only will the Government depend for its very existence on the Labour vote, but it will depend for its safety on Irish support. If, therefore, the Irish also are wisely guided and do not press the favourable situation too far, the long delayed concession of Home Rule is a certainty within the next two years. Necessarily, the success of the Irish and the Socialist can bear no fruit unless the veto of the House of Lords is annulled or a new elective Upper Chamber takes the place of the present absurd and antiquated institution. We have not therefore erred in forecasting a democratic revolution in England as the inevitable result of the action of the House of Lords in rejecting the Budget, or, as they euphemistically put it, referring it to the country. Mr. Balfour has recognised that the verdict of the United Kingdom has been given in favour of the Budget and against Tariff Reform. The real issue is now, what

it should have been throughout, the reform abolition or replacement of the House of Lords.

When the elections were in progress, Mr. Asquith committed himself on the question of Home Rule, and, even if he wished to draw back from it, in face of his dependence on Labour and Irish votes he can no longer retreat. All that has been done is to qualify his promise of a final solution of the Irish question by stipulating that it shall contain provision for the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament as well as local autonomy of a liberal character for the Irish nation. This means not only the restriction of all Imperial questions to the province of the Parliament meeting in London, but the decision of questions between Ireland and England by the same body and possibly a power of veto in certain matters for the British Cabinet. It is impossible for an English statesman to go further in the direction of Irish autonomy, and the Irish party will be well advised to accept even this qualified autonomy and make it an instrument for so developing the strength of the Irish nation as to make further concession in the future inevitable. The life work of Parnell has not gone in vain; the two great questions he brought to a head by his masterly policy, the liberation of the Irish peasant from rackrenting landlords and the liberation of the Irish race from an unsympathetic domination, are both in process of solution within quarter of a century of his untimely end. Liberty is a Goddess who is exacting in her demands on her votaries, but if they are faithful, she never disappointed them of their reward.

For India, the elections are as favourable as an English election can be. We do not regard the defeat of pro-Indian Liberal candidates as a calamity. There is always a limit to the efforts of the members of Parliament, however sincere, who are bound by ties of party loyalty and discipline not to embarrass their official chiefs beyond a certain point. The Labour members and the Nationalists are bound by no such scruples and both of these parties have sympathy with India. The one problem before us is how we turn the sentiment of sympathy into an effective impetus towards action; for in European politics sentiment is not a sufficiently strong motive unless it is supported by some practical community of interests. The Irish Parliamentary party were able to bring Home Rule into the category of realisable ideals because they made it to the interest of the British parties to get rid of the

Irish difficulty; if that ideal is realised now, it will be because the interests of the English Liberals and the Irish Nationalists have become one and, therefore, they must accommodate each other. It is forces that effect great political changes, not moral sentiments or vague generosities. Even a great idea can only becomes operative when it is manifested as a working force with a definite aim and distinct pressure on its environments.

## MR. MACDONALD'S VISIT

The tour undertaken by Mr. Ramsay Macdonald in India has been cut short by the call from England summoning home to take his part in the great struggle which is the beginning of the end of Conservative and semi-Aristocratic England. In the peaceful revolution which that struggle presages and in which it must sooner or later culminate, Mr. Macdonald's party stands to the final winners. It is the semi-Socialistic Radical element in the Ministry attracted towards the Labour Party to which the precipitation of this inevitable struggle is due. The Labour Party is now predominatingly Socialistic and is purging itself of the old individualistic leaven which looked forward to no higher ideal than an eight hours day, Old Age pensions and Trade Union politics. The Labour members, Messrs Burt and Fenwick, who represent this Old-world element, have received notice to quit from the Labour organisations which helped them into Parliament and much nonsense of a kind familiar to ourselves is being talked about the ingratitude of Labour to these veterans. The only justification for the existence of these gentlemen in Parliament is that they stand for the new insurgent demos and, if they cannot keep pace with the advancing sentiment of the people who keep them in Parliament, their duty is to retire, and the ingratitude is theirs if they try to hamper the progress of their lifelong supporters by fighting the representatives of the new aspirations in the interests of the middle-class party. Mr. Macdonald belongs to the new thought, but he is, we believe, one of those who would hasten slowly to the goal. He has not the rugged personality of Mr. Kier Hardie, but combines in himself, in a way Mr. Hardie scarcely does, the old culture and the new spirit. He has as broad a sympathy and as penetrating an intelligence as Mr. Nevinson, but not the latter's quick intensity. Nevertheless, behind the slow

consideration and calm thoughtfulness of his manner, one detects hidden iron and the concealed roughness of the force that has come to destroy and to build, some hint of the rugged outlines of Demogorgon, the claws of Narasingha. For everyman is not only himself, he is that which he represents. Mr. Macdonald has been reserved and cautious during his visit and has spoken out only on the Reforms and Reuter, nor have his remarks on these subjects passsed the limits of what any sincere Liberal would hold to be a moderate statement of the truth. Mr. Macdonald is one who does not speak out the whole of himself, he is a politician born, and born politicians do not care to outpace by too great a stride the speedily accomplishable fact. Whatever wider vistas they may see beyond, they prefer to move steadily towards them rather than speak of them. So far as an Englishman can help India, and that under present circumstances is hardly at all, he certainly wishes to help. It is not his fault that the blindness of his countrymen and the conditions of the problem in India make men like him, perforce, little better than sympathetic spectators of the passionate struggle between established privilege and a nation in the making that the world watches now in India.

# 34

## FATE AND FREE-WILL

SRI AUROBINDO

A Question which has hitherto divided human thought and received no final solution, is the freedom of the human being in his relation to the Power intelligent or unintelligent that rules the world. We strive for freedom in our human relations, to freedom we move as our goal, and every fresh step in our human progress is a further approximation to our ideal. But are we free in ourselves ? We seem to be free, to do that which we choose and not that which is chosen for us; but it is possible that the freedom may be illusory and our apparent freedom may be a real and iron-bondage. We may be bound by predestination, the will of a Supreme Intelligent Power, of blind inexorable Nature, or the necessity of our own previous development.

The first is the answer of the devout and submissive mind in its dependence on God, but, unless we adopt a Calvinistic Fatalism, the admission of the guiding and overriding will of God does not exclude the permission of freedom to the individual. The second is the answer of the scientist; Heredity determines out Nature, the laws of Nature limit our action, cause and effect compel the course of our development, and, if it be urged that we may determine effects by creating causes, the answer is that our own actions are determined by previous causes over which we have no control and our action itself is a necessary response to a stimulus from outside. The third is the answer of the Buddhist and of post-Buddhistic Hinduism. "It is our fate, it is written on our

forehead, when our Karma is exhausted then alone our calamities will pass from us;"—this is the spirit of tamasic inaction justifying itself by a misreading of the theory of Karma.

If we go back to the true Hindu teaching independent of Buddhistic influence, we shall find that it gives us a reconciliation of the dispute by a view of man's psychology in which both Fate and Free-will are recognised. The difference between Buddhism and Hinduism is that to the former the human soul is nothing, to the latter it is everything. The whole universe exists in the spirit, by the spirit, for the spirit; all we do, think and feel is for the spirit. Nature depends upon the Atman, all its movement, play, action is for the Atman.

There is no Fate except insistent causality which is only another name for Law, and law itself is only an instrument in the hands of Nature for the satisfaction of the spirit. Law is nothing but a mode or rule of action; it is called in our philosophy not Law but Dharma; holding together, it is that by which the action of the universe, the action of its parts, the action of the individual is held together. This action in the universal, the parts, the individuals is called Karma, work, action, energy in play, and the definition of Dharma or Law is action as decided by the nature of the thing in which action takes place,—*swabhava niyatam karma.* Each separate existence, each individual has a *swabhava* or nature and acts according to it, each group, species or mass of individuals has a *swabhava* or nature and acts according to it, and the universe also has its *swabhava* or nature and acts according to it. Mankind is a group of individuals and every man acts, according to his human nature, that is his law of being as distinct from animals, trees or other groups of individuals. Each man has a distinct nature of his own and that is his law of being which ought to guide him as an individual. But beyond and above those minor laws is the great Dharma of the universe which provides that certain previous Karma or action must lead to certain new Karma or results.

The whole law of causality may be defined as previous action leading to subsequent action, Karma and *karmaphala.* The Hindu theory is that thought and feeling, as well as actual speech or deeds, are part of Karma and create effects, and we do not accept the European sentiment that outward expression of thought and feeling in speech or deed is more important than the thought or feeling itself. This outward expression is only part of the thing

expressed and its results are only part of the *karmaphala*. The previous Karma has not one kind of result but many. In the first place, a certain habit of thought or feeling produces certain actions and speech or certain habits of action and speech in this life, which materialize in the next as good fortune or evil fortune. Again, it produces by its action for the good or ill of others a necessity of happiness or sorrow for ourselves in another birth. It produces, moreover, a tendency to persistence of that habit of thought or feeling in future lives, which involves the persistence of the good fortune or evil fortune, happiness or sorrow. Or, acting on different lines, it produces a revolt or reaction and replacement by opposite habits which in their turn necessitate opposite results for good or evil. This is the chain of Karma, the bondage of works, which is the Hindu Fate and from which the Hindu seek salvation.

If, however, there is no escape from the Law, if Nature is supreme and inexorable, there can be no salvation; freedom becomes a chimera, bondage eternal. There can be no escape, unless there is something within us which is free and lord, superior to Nature. This entity the Hindu teaching finds in the spirit ever free and blissful which is one in essence and in reality with the Supreme Soul of the Universe. The spirit does not act, it is Nature that contains the action. If the spirit acted, it would be bound by its action. The thing that acts is Prakriti, Nature, which determines the *swabhava* of things and is the source and condition of Law or Dharma. The Soul or Purusha holds up the *swabhava*, watches and enjoys the action and its fruit, sanctions the Law or Dharma. It is the king, Lord or Ishwara without whose consent nothing can be done by Prakriti. But the king is above the law and free.

It is this power of sanction that forms the element of free will in our lives. The spirit consents not that itself shall be bound, but that its enjoyment should be bound by time, space and causality and by the *swabhava* and the Dharma. It consents to virtue or sin, good fortune or evil fortune, health or disease, joy or suffering, or it refuses them. What it is attached to that Nature multiplies for it; what it is weary of, has *vairagya* for, that Nature withdraws from it. Only, because the enjoyment is in space and time, therefore, even after the withdrawal of consent, the habitual action continues for a time just as the locomotive continues to move

after the steam is shut off, but in a little while it slows down and finally comes to a standstill. And because the enjoyment is in causality, the removal of the habit of action is effected not spontaneously and freely, but by an established process or one of many established processes. This is the great truth now dawning on the world, that Will is the thing which moves the world and that Fate is merely a process by which Will fulfils itself.

But in order to feel its mastery of Nature, the human soul must put itself into communion with the infinite, and universal Spirit. Its will must be one with the universal Will. The human soul is one with the universal Spirit, but in the body it stands out as something separate and unconnected, because a certain freedom is permitted it in order that the *swabhava* of things may be diversely developed in different bodies. In using this freedom the soul may do it ignorantly or knowingly. If it uses it ignorantly, it is not really free, for ignorance brings with it the illusion of enslavement to Nature. Used knowingly, the freedom of the soul becomes one with surrender to the universal Will. Either apparent bondage to Fate in Nature or realised freedom from Nature in the universal freedom and lordship of the Paramatman and Parameswara, this is the choice offered to the human soul. The gradual self-liberation from bondage to Nature is the true progress of humanity. The inert stone or block is a passive sport of natural laws, God is their Master. Man stands between these two extreme terms and moves upward from one to the other.

# 35

## OURSELVES*

SRI AUROBINDO

The *Karmayogin* comes into the field to fulfil a function which an increasing tendency in the country demands. The life of the nation which once flowed in a broad and single stream has long been severed into a number of separate meagre and shallow channels. The two main floods have followed the paths of religion and politics, but they have flowed separately. Our political activity has crept in a channel cut for it by European or Europeanised minds; it tended always to a superficial wideness, but was deficient in depth and volume. The national genius, originality, individuality poured itself into religion, while our politics were imitative and unreal. Yet without a living political activity national life cannot, under modern circumstances, survive. So also there has been a stream of social life, more and more muddied and disturbed, seeking to get clearness, depth, largeness, freedom, but always failing and increasing in weakness or distraction. There was a stream too of industrial life, faint and thin, the poor survival of the old vigorous Indian artistic and industrial capacity murdered by unjust laws and an unscrupulous trade policy. All these ran in disconnected channels, sluggish, scattered ineffectual. The tendency is now for these streams to unite again into one mighty invincible and grandiose flood. To assist that tendency, to give voice and definiteness to the deeper aspirations

*Editorial in the *Karmayogin*.

now forming obscurely within the national consciousness is the chosen work of the *Karmayogin.*

There is no national life perfect or sound without the *caturvaranya.* The life of the nation must contain within itself the life of the Brahmin,—spirituality, knowledge, learning, high and pure ethical aspiration and endeavour; the life of the Kshatriya,—manhood and strength moral and physical, the love of battle, the thirst for glory, the sense of honour, chivalry, self-devotion, generosity, grandeur of soul; the life of the Vaishya,—trade, industry, thrift, prosperity, benevolence, philanthropy; the life of the Sudra,—honesty, simplicity, labour, religious and quiet service to the nation even in the humblest position and the most insignificant kind of work. The cause of India's decline was the practical disappearance of the Kshatriya and the dwindling of the Vaishya. The whole political history of India since the tyranny of the Nandas has been an attempt to resuscitate or replace the Kshatriya. But the attempt was only partially successful. The Vaishya held his own for a long time, indeed, until the British advent by which he has almost been extinguished. When the *caturvarnya* disappears, there comes *varnasankara,* utter confusion of the great types which keep a nation vigorous and sound. The Kshatriya dwindled. The Vaishya dwindled, the Brahmin and Sudra were left. The inevitable tendency was for the Brahmin type to disappear and the first sign of his disappearance was utter degeneracy, the tendency to lose himself and while keeping some outward signs of the Brahmin to gravitate towards Sudrahood. In the *Kaliyuga* the Sudra is powerful and attracts into himself the less vigorous Brahmin, as the earth attracts purer but smaller bodies, and the *Brahmatej,* the spiritual force, of the latter, already diminished, dwindles to nothingness. For the *Satyayuga* to return, we must get back the *Brahmatej* and make it general. For the *Brahmatej* is the basis of all the rest and in the *Satyayuga* all men have it more or less and by it the nation lives and is great.

All this is, let us say, a parable. It is more than a parable, it is a great truth. But our educated class have become so unfamiliar with the deeper knowledge of their forefathers that it has to be translated into modern European terms before they can understand it. For it is the European ideas alone that are real to them and the great truths of Indian thought seem to them mere metaphors, allergies and mystic parables. So well has British

education done its fatal denationalising work in India.

The Brahmin stands for religion, science, scholarship and the higher morality; the Kshatriya for war, politics and administration; the Vaishya for the trades, professions and industries, the Sudra for labour and service. It is only when these four great departments of human activity are all in a robust and flourishing condition that the nation is sound and great. When any of these disappear or suffer, it is bad for the body politic. And the two highest are the least easy to be spared. If they survive in full strength, they can provide themselves with the two others, but if either the Kshatriya or the Brahmin go, if either the political force or the spiritual force of a nation is lost, that nation is doomed unless it can revive or replace the missing strength. And of the two the Brahmin is the most important. He can always create the Kshatriya; spiritual force can always raise up material force to defend it. But if the Brahmin becomes the Sudra, then the lower instinct of the serf and the labourer becomes all in all, the instinct, to serve and seek a living as one supreme object of life, the instinct to accept safety as a compensation for lost greatness and in glorious case and dependence in place of the ardours of high aspiration for the nation and the individual. When a spirituality is lost all is lost. This is the fate from which we have narrowly escaped by the resurgence of the soul of India in Nationalism.

But the resurgence is not yet complete. There is the sentiment of Indianism, there is not yet the knowledge. There is a vague ideal there is no definite conception or deep insight. We have yet to know ourselves, what we were, are and may be; what we did in the past and what we are capable of doing in the future; our history and our mission. This is the first and most important work for which the *Karmayogin* sets for itself, to popularize this knowledge. The Vedanta or Sufism, the temple or the mosque, Nanak and Kabir and Ramdas, Chaitanya or Guru Govinda, Brahmin and Kayastha and Namasudra, whatever national asset we have indigenous or acclimatised, it will seek to make known, to put in its right place and appreciate. And the second thing is how to use these assets so as to swell the sum of national life and produce the future. It is easy to appraise their relations to the past; it is more difficult to give them their place in the future. The third thing is to know the outside world and its relation to us and how to deal with it. That is the problem which we find at

present most difficult and insistent, but its solution depends on the solution of the others.

We have said that *Brahmatej* is the thing we need most of all and first of all. In one sense, that means the pre-eminence of religion; but after all, what the Europeans mean by religion is not *Brahmatej* which is rather spirituality, the force and energy of thought and action arising from communion with or self-surrender to that with us which rules the world. In that sense we shall use it. This force and energy can be directed to any purpose God desires for us, it is sufficient to knowledge, love or service; it is good for the liberation of an individual soul, the building of a nation of the turning of a tool. It works from within, it works in the power of God, it works with superhuman energy. The reawakening of that force in three hundred millions of men by the means which our past has placed in our hands, that is our object.

The European is proud of his success in divorcing religion from life. Religion, he says, is all very well in its place, but it has nothing to do with politics or science or commerce, which it spoils by its intrusion; it is meant only for Sundays when, if one is English, one puts on black clothes and tries to feel good, and, if one is continental, one puts the rest of the week away and amuses oneself. In reality, the European has not succeeded in getting rid of religion from his life. It is coming back in socialism, in the Anarchism of Bakunin and Tolstoi, in many other isms; and, in whatever form it comes, it insists on engrossing the whole life, on moulding the whole society and politics under the law of idealistic aspiration. It does not use the word God or grasp the idea, but it sees God in humanity. What the European understood by religion had to be got rid of and put out of life, but real religion, spirituality, idealism, altruism, self-devotion, the hunger after perfection is the whole destiny of humanity and cannot be got rid of. After all God does exist and if He exists, you cannot shove Him into a corner and says, "That is your place and as for the world and life it belongs to us." He pervades and returns. Every age of denial is only a preparation for a larger and more comprehensive affirmation.

The *Karmayogin* will be more of a national review than a weekly newspaper. We shall notice current events only as they evidence, help, affect or resist the growth of national life and the development of the soul of the nation. Political and social

problems we shall deal with from this standpoint, seeking first their spiritual roots and inner causes and then proceeding to measures and remedies. In a similar spirit we shall deal with all sources of national strength in the past and in the present, seeking to bring them home to all comprehensions and make them applicable to our life, dynamic and not static, creative and not merely preservative. For if there is no creation, there must be disintegration; if there is no advance and victory, there must be recoil and defeat.

# 36

## YOGA AND HYPNOTISM

SRI AUROBINDO

When the mind is entirely passive, then the force of Nature which works in the whole of animate and inanimate creation, has free play; for it is in reality this force which works in man as well as in the sun and star. There is no doubt of this truth whether in Hinduism or in Science. This is the thing called Nature, the sum of cosmic force and energy, which alone Science recognises as the source of all work and activity. This also is the Prakriti of the Hindus to which under different names Sankhya and Vedanta agree in assigning a similar position and function in the Universe. But the immediate question is whether this force can act in man independently of man's individual will and initiative. Must it a ways act through his volition or has it a power of independent operation ? The first real proof which Science has had of the power of action independent of volition is in the phenomena of hypnotism. Unfortunately, the nature of hypnotism has not been properly understood. It is supposed that by putting the subject to sleep the hypnotist is able in some mysterious and unexplained way to substitute his will for the subject's. In a certain sense all the subject's activities in the hypnotic state are the results of his own volition, but that volition is not spontaneous, it is used as a slave by the operator working through the medium of suggestion. Whatever the hypnotist suggests that the subject shall think, act or feel, he thinks, acts or feels, and whatever the hypnotist suggests that the subject shall become, he becomes. What is it that gives the

operator this stupendous power? Why should the mere fact of a man passing into this sleep-condition suspend the ordinary reactions of mind and body and substitute others at the mere word of the man who has said to him, "Sleep"? It is sometimes supposed that it is the superior will of the hypnotist which overcomes the will of the other and makes it a slave. There are two strong objections to this view. It does not appear to be true that it is the weak and distracted will that is most easily hypnotised; on the contrary the strong concentrated mind forms a good subject. Secondly, if it were the operator's will using the will of the subject, then the results produced must be such as the latter could himself bring about, since the capacities of the instrument cannot be exceeded by the power working through the instrument. Even if we suppose that the invading will brings with it its own force still the results produced must not exceed the sum of its capacity plus the capacity of the instrument. If they commonly do so, we must suppose that it is neither the will of the operator nor the will of the subject nor the sum of these two wills that is active, but some other and more potent force. This is precisely what we see in hypnotic performance.

What is this force that enables and compels a weak man to become so rigid that strong arms cannot bend him? that reverses the operations of the senses and abrogates pain? that changes the fixed character of a man in the shortest periods? that is able to develop power where there was no power, moral strength where there was weakness, health where there was disease? that in its higher manifestations can exceed the barriers of space and time and produce that far-sight, far-hearing and far-thinking which shows mind to be an untrammelled agent or medium pervading the world and not limited to the body which it informs or seems to inform. The European scientist experimenting with hypnotism is handling forces which he cannot understand, stumbling on truths of which he cannot give a true account. His feet are faltering on the threshold of Yoga. It is held by some thinkers, and not unreasonably if we consider these phenomena, that mind is all and contains all. It is not the body which determines the operations of the mind, it is the mind which determines the laws of the body. It is the ordinary law of the body that if it is struck, pierced or roughly pressed it feels pain. This law is created by the mind which associates pain with these contacts, and if the mind changes

its dharma and is able to associate with these contacts not pain but insensibility or pleasure, then they will bring about those results of insensibility or pleasure and no other. The pain and pleasure are not the result of the contact, neither is their seat in the body; they are the result of association and their seat is in the mind. Vinegar is sour, sugar sweet, but to the hypnotised mind vinegar can be sweet, sugar sour. The sourness or sweetness is not in the vinegar or sugar, but in the mind. The heart also is the subject of the mind. My emotions are like my physical feelings, the result of association, and my character is the result of accumulated past experiences with their resultant associations and reactions crystallising into habits of mind and heart summed up in the word, character. These things like all the rest that are made of the stuff of associations are not permanent or binding but fluid and mutable. *Anityah sarvasamskarah.* If my friend blames me, I am grieved; that is an association and not binding. The grief is not the result of the blame but of an association in the mind. I can change the association so far that blame will cause me no grief, praise no elation, I can entirely stop the reactions of joy and grief by the same force that created them. They are habits of mind, nothing more. In the same way though with more difficulty I can stop the reactions of physical pain and pleasure so that nothing will hurt my body. If I am a coward today, I can be a hero tomorrow. The cowardice was merely the habit of associating certain things with pain and grief and of shrinking from the pain and grief; this shrinking and the physical sensations in the vital or nervous man which accompany it are called fear, and they can be dismissed by the action of the mind which created them. All these are propositions which European Science is even now unwilling to admit, yet it is being proved more and more by the phenomena of hypnotism that these effects can be temporarily at least produced by one man upon another, and it has even been proved that disease can be permanently cured or character permanently changed by the action of one mind upon another. The rest will be established in time by the development of hypnotism.

The difference between Yoga and hypnotism is that what hypnotism does for a man through the agency of another and in the sleeping state, Yoga does for him by his own agency and in the waking state. The hypnotic sleep is necessary in order to prevent the activity of the subject's mind full of old ideas and associations,

from interfering with the operator. In the waking state he would naturally refuse to experience sweetness in vinegar or sourness in sugar or to believe that he can change from disease to health, cowardice to heroism by a mere act of faith; his established associations would rebel violently against such contradictions of universal experience. The force which transcends matter would be hampered by the obstruction of ignorance and attachment to universal error. The hypnotic sleep does not make the mind a *tabula rasa* but it renders it passive to everything but the touch of the operator. Yoga similarly teaches the passivity of the mind so that the will may act unhampered by the sanskaras or old associations. It is these sanskaras, the habits formed by experience in the body, heart or mind, that form the laws of our psychology. The associations of the mind are the stuff of which our life is made. They are more persistent in the body than in the mind and therefore harder to alter. They are more persistent in the race than in the individual; the conquest of the body and mind by the individual is comparatively easy and can be done in the space of a single life, but the same conquest by the race involves the development of ages. It is conceivable, however, that the practice of Yoga by a great number of men and persistence in the practice by their descendants might bring about profound changes in human psychology and, by stamping these changes into body and brain through heredity, evolve a superior race which would endure and by the law of the survival of the fittest eliminate the weaker kinds of humanity. Just as the rudimentary mind of the animal has been evolved into the fine instrument of the human being so the rudiments of higher force and faculty in the present race might evolve into the perfect buddhi of the Yogin.

*Yo yacchraddhah sa eva sah.* According as is a man's fixed and complete belief, that he is,—not immediately always but sooner or later, by the law that makes the psychical tend inevitably to express itself in the material. The will is the agent by which all these changes are made and old sanskaras are replaced by new, and the will cannot act without faith. The question then arises whether mind is the ultimate force or there is another which communicates with the outside world through the mind. Is the mind the agent or simply the instrument ? If the mind be all, then it is only animals that can have the power to evolve; but this does not accord with the laws of the world as we know them. The tree

evolves, the clod evolves, everything evolves. Even in animals it is evident that mind is not all in the sense of being the ultimate expression of existence or the ultimate force in Nature. It seems to be all only because that which is all expresses itself in the mind and passes everything through it for the sake of manifestation. That which we call mind is a medium which pervades the world. Otherwise we could not have that instantaneous and electrical action of mind upon mind of which human experience is full and of which the new phenomena of hypnotism, telepathy, etc. are only fresh proofs. There must be contact, there must be interpenetration if we are to account for these phenomena on any reasonable theory. Mind therefore is held by the Hindus to be a species of subtle matter in which ideas are waves or ripples, and it is not limited by the physical body which it uses as an instrument. There is an ulterior force which works through this subtle medium called mind. All animal species develops according to the modern theory, under the subtle influence of the environment. The environment supplies a need and those who satisfy the need develop a new species which survives because it is more fit. This is not the result of any intellectual perception of the need nor of a resolve to develop the necessary changes, but of a desire, often though not always a mute, inarticulate and unthought desire. That desire attracts a force which satisfies it. What is that force ? The tendency of the physical desire to manifest in the material change is one term in the equation; the force which develops the change in response to the desire is another. We have will beyond mind which dictates the change, we have force beyond mind which effects it. According to Hindu philosophy the will is the Jiva, the Purusha, the self in the Anandakosha acting through Vijnana, universal or transcendental mind; this is what we call spirit. The force is Prakriti or Shakti, the female principle in Nature which is at the root of all action. Behind both is the single Self of the universe which contains both Jiva and Prakriti, spirit and material energy. Yoga puts these ultimate existences within us in touch with each other and by stilling the activity of the sanskaras or associations in mind and body enable them to act swiftly, victoriously, and as the world calls it, miraculously. In reality, there is no such thing as miracle; there are only laws and processes which are not yet understood.

Yoga is therefore no dream, no illusion or mystics. It is

known that we can alter the associations of mind and body temporarily and that the mind can alter the conditions of the body partially. Yoga asserts that these things can be done permanently and completely. For the body conquest of disease, pain and material obstructions, for the mind aberration from bondage to past experience and the heavier limitations of space and time, for the heart victory over sin and grief and fear, for the spirit unclouded bliss, strength and illumination, this is the gospel on Yoga, is the goal to which Hinduism points humanity.

# 37

## YOGA AND HUMAN EVOLUTION

Sri Aurobindo

The whole burden of our human progress has been an attempt to escape from the bondage to the body and the vital impulses. According to the scientific theory the human being began as the animal, developed through the savage and consummated in the modern civilized man. The Indian theory is different. God created the world by developing the many out of the One and the material out of the spiritual. From the beginning the objects which compose the physical world were arranged by Him in their causes, developed under the law of their being in the subtle or psychical world and then manifested in the gross or material world. From *karana* to *suksma*, from *suksma* to *sthula*, and back again, that is the formnla. Once manifested in matter the world proceeds by laws which do not change, from age to age by a regular succession, until it is all withdrawn back again into the source from which it came. The material goes back into the psychical and the psychical is involved in its cause or seed. It is again put out when the period of expansion recurs and runs its course on similar lines but with different details till the period of contraction is due. Hinduism regards the world as a recurrent series of phenomena of which the terms vary but the general formula abides the same. The theory is only acceptable if we recognize the truth of the conception formulated in the Vishnu Purana of the world as *vijnana-vijrmbhitani* developments of ideas in the Universal Intelligence which lies at the root of all material

phenomena and by its indwelling force shapes the growth of the tree and the evolution of the clod as well as the development of living creatures and the progress of mankind. Whichever theory we take, the laws of the material world are not affected. From aeon to aeon, from kalpa to kalpa Narayan manifests himsslf in an ever-evolving humanity which grows in experience by a series of expansions and contractions towards its destined self-realisation in God. That evolution is not denied by the Hindu theory of yugas. Each age in the Hindu system has its own line of moral and spiritual evolution and the decline of dharma or established law of conduct from the Satya to Kaliyuga is not in reality a deterioration but a detrition of the outward forms and props of spirituality in order to prepare a deeper spiritual intensity within the heart. In each Kaliyuga mankind gains something in essential spirituality. Whether we take the modern scientific or the ancient Hindu standpoint the progress of humanity is a fact. The wheel of Brahma rotates for ever but it does not turn in the same place; its rotations carry it forward.

The animal is distinguished from man by its enslavement to the body and the vital impulses. *Asanaya mrtyu*, Hunger who is Death, evolved the material world from of old, and it is the physical hunger and desire and the vital sensations and primary emotions connected with the *prana* that seek to feed upon the world in the beast and in the savage man who approximates to the condition of the beast. Out of this animal state according to European Science, man rises working out the tiger and the ape by intellectual and moral development in the social condition. If the beast has to be worked out, it is obvious that the body and the *prana* must be conquered, and as that conquest is more or less complete, the man is more or less evolved. The progress of mankind has been placed by many predominatingly in the development of the human intellect, and intellectual development is no doubt essential to self-conquest. The animal and the savage are bound by the body because the ideas of the animal or the ideas of the savage are mostly limited to those sensations and associations which are connected with the body. The development of intellect enables a man to find the deeper self within and partially replace what our philosophy calls the *dehatmaka buddhi*, the sum of ideas and sensations which make us think of the body as ourself, by another set of ideas which reach beyond the body,

and, existing for their own delight and substituting intellectual and moral satisfaction as the chief objects of life, master, if they cannot entirely silence, the clamour of the lower sensual desires. That animal ignorance which is engrossed with the cares and the pleasures of the body and the vital impulses, emotions and sensations is *tamasic*, the result of the predominance of the third principle of nature which leads to ignorance and inertia. That is the state of the animal and the lower forms of humanity which are called in the Purana the first or tamasic creation. This animal ignorance the development of the intellect tends to dispel and it assumes therefore an all important place in human evolution.

But it is not only through the intellect that man rises. If the clarified intellect is not supported by purified emotions the intellect tends to be dominated once more by the body and to put itself as its service and the lordship of the body over the whole man becomes more dangerous than in the natural state because the innocence of the natural state is lost. The power of knowledge is placed at the disposal of senses *sattwa* serves *tamas*, the god in us becomes the slave of the brute. The disservice which scientific Materialism is unintentionally doing the world is to encourage a return to this condition; the suddenly awakened masses of men unaccustomed to deal intellectually with ideas, able to grasp the broad attractive innovations of free thought but unable to appreciate its delicate reservations, verge towards that reeling back into the beast, that relapse into barbarism which was the condition of the Roman Empire at a high stage of material civilisation and intellectual culture and which a distinguished British statesman declared the other day to be the condition to which all Europe approached. The development of the emotions is therefore the first condition of a sound human evolution. Unless the feelings tend away from the body and the love of others takes increasingly the place of the brute love of self, there can be no progress upwards. The organisation of human society tends to develop this altruistic element in man which makes for life and battles with and conquers *asanaya mrtyu.* It is therefore not the struggle for life, or at least not the struggle for our own life, but the struggle for the life of others which is the most important term in evolution,—for our children, for our family, for our class, for our community, for our race and nation, for humanity. An ever-enlarging self takes the place of the old narrow self which is

confined to our individual mind and body and it is this moral growth which society helps and organises.

So far there is little essential difference between our own ideals of human progress and those of the West except in this vital point that the West believes this evolution to be a development of matter and the satisfaction of the reason, the reflective and observing intellect, to be the highest term of our progress. Here it is that our religion parts company with Science. It declares the evolution to be a conquest of matter by the recovery of the deeper emotional and intellectual self which was involved in the body and overclouded by the desires of the *prana.* In the language of the Upanishads the *manahkosa* and *buddhikosa* are more than the *pranakosa* and *annakosa* and it is to them that man rises in his evolution. Religion farther seeks a higher term for our evolution than the purified emotions or the clarified activity of the observing and reflecting intellect. The higher term of evolution is the spirit in which knowledge, love and action, the three-fold *dharma* of humanity, find their fulfilment and end. This is the atman in the *anandakosa*, and it is by communion and identity of this individual self with the universal self which is God that man will become entirely pure, entirely strong, entirely wise and entirely blissful, and the evolution will be fulfilled. The conquest of the body and the vital self by the purification of the emotions and the clarification of the intellect was the principal work of the past. The purification has been done by morality and religion, the clarification by science and philosophy, art, literature and social and political life being the chief media in which these uplifting forces have worked. The conquest of the emotions and the intellect by the spirit as the work of the future. Yoga is the means by which that conquest becomes possible.

In Yoga, the whole past progress of humanity, a progress which it holds on a very uncertain lease, is rapidly summed up, confirmed and made an inalienable possession. The body is conquered, not imperfectly as by the ordinary civilized man, but entirely. The vital part is purified and made the instrument of the higher emotional and intellectual self in its relations with the outer world. The ideas which go outward are replaced by the ideas which move within, the baser qualities are worked out of the system and replaced by those which are higher, the lower emotions are crowded out by the nobler. Finally, all ideas and emotions are

stilled and by the perfect awakening of the intuitive reason which places mind in communion with spirit the whole man is ultimately placed at the service of the Infinite. All false self merges into the true self. Man acquires likeness, union or identification with God. This is *mukti,* the state in which humanity thoroughly realises the freedom and immortality which are its eternel goal.

# 38

## MAN, SLAVE OR FREE ?

SRI AUROBINDO

The exclusive pursuit of Yoga by men who seclude themselves either physically or mentally from the contact of the world has led to an erroneous view of this science as something mystic, far-off and unreal. The secrecy which has been observed with regard to Yogic practices,—a necessary secrecy in the former stages of human evolution—has stereotyped this error. Practices followed by men who form secret circles and confine the instruction in the mysteries strictly to those who have a certain preparatory fitness, inevitably bear the stamp to the outside world of occultism. In reality, there is nothing intrinsically hidden, occult or mystic about Yoga. Yoga is based upon certain laws of human psychology, a certain knowledge about the power of the mind over the body and inner spirit over the mind which are not generally realised and have hitherto been considered by those in the secret too momentous in their consequences for disclosure until men should be trained to use them aright. Just as a set of men who had discovered and tested the uttermost possibilities of mesmerism and hypnotism might hesitate to divulge them freely to the world lest the hypnotic power should be misused by ignorance or perversity or abused in the interests of selfishness and crime, so the Yogins have usually preserved the knowledge of these much greater forces within us in a secrecy broken only when they were sure of the previous ethical and spiritual training of the neophyte and his physical and moral fitness for the Yogic practices. It became

therefore an established rule for the learner to observe strict reserve as to the inner experiences of Yoga and for the developed Yogin as far as possible to conceal himself. This has not prevented treatises and manuals from being published dealing with the physical or with the moral and intellectual sides of Yoga. Nor has it prevented great spirits who have gained their Yoga not by the ordinary careful and scientific methods but by their own strength and the special grace of God, from revealing themselves and their spiritual knowledge to mankind and in their intense love for humanity imparting something of their power to the world. Such were Buddha, Christ, Mahomed, Chaitanya, such have been Ramkrishna and Vivekananda. It is still the orthodox view that the experiences of Yoga must not be revealed to the uninitiated. But a new era dawns upon us in which the old laws must be modified. Already the West is beginning to discover the secrets of Yoga. Some of its laws have revealed themselves however dimly and imperfectly to the scientists of Europe while others through Spiritualism, Christian Science, clairvoyance, telepathy and other modern forms of occultism are being almost discovered by accident as if by men groping in the dark and stumbling over truths they cannot understand. The time has almost come when India can no longer keep her light to herself but must pour it out upon the world. Yoga must be revealed to mankind because without it mankind cannot take the next step in the human evolution.

The psychology of the human race has not yet been discovered by science. All creation is essentially the same and proceeds by similar though not identical laws. If, therefore, we see in the outside material world that all phenomena proceed from and can be reduced to a single causal substance from which they were born, in which they move and to which they return, the same truth is likely to hold good in the psychical world. The unity of the material universe has now been acknowledged by the scientific intellect of Europe and the high priests of atheism and materialism in Germany have declared the "*ekam evadvitiyam*" in matter with no uncertain voice. In so doing they have merely re-affirmed the discovery made by Indian masters of the Yogic science thousands of years ago. But the European scientists have not discovered and sure and certain methods, such as they have in dealing with gross matter, for investigating psychical phenomena. They can only observe the most external manifestations of mind in action. But in

these manifestations the mind is so much enveloped in the action of the outer objects and seems so dependent on them that it is very difficult for the observer to find out the springs of its action or any regularity in its workings. The European scientists have therefore come to the conclusion that it is the stimulations of outside objects which are the cause of psychical phenomena, and that even when the mind seems to act of itself and on its own material, it is only associating, grouping together and manipulating the recorded experience from outside objects. The very nature of mind is, according to them, a creation of past material experience transmitted by heredity with such persistence that we have grown steadily from the savage with his rudimentary mind to the civilized man of the twentieth century. As a natural result of these materialistic theories, science has found it difficult to discover any true psychical centre for the multifarious phenomena of mind and has therefore fixed upon the brain, the material organ of thought, as the only real centre. From this materialistic philosophy have resulted certain theories very dangerous to the moral future of mankind. First, man is a creation and slave of matter. He can only master matter by obeying it. Secondly, the mind itself is a form of gross matter and not independent of and master of the senses. Thirdly, there is no real free will, because all our action is determined by two great forces, heredity and environment. We are the slaves of our nature, and where we seem to be free from its mastery, it is because we are yet worse slaves of our environment, worked on by the forces that surround and manipulate us.

It is from these false and dangerous doctrines of materialism which tend to subvert man's future and hamper his evolution, that Yoga gives us a means of escape. It asserts on the contrary man's freedom from matter and gives him a means of asserting that freedom. The first great fundamental discovery of the Yogins was a means of analysing the experiences of the mind and the heart. By Yoga one can isolate mind, watch its workings as under a microscope, separate every minute function of the various parts of the "*antahkarana*", the inner organ, every mental and moral faculty, test its isolated workings as well as its relations to other functions and faculties and trace backwards the operations of mind to subtler and ever subtle sources until just as material analysis arrives at a primal entity from which all proceeds, so Yoga analysis arrives at a spiritual entity from which all proceeds. It is also able

to locate and distinguish the psychical centre to which all psychical phenomena gather and so to fix the roots or personality. In this analysis its first discovery is that mind can entirely isolate itself from external objects and work in itself and of itself. This does not, it is true, carry us very far, because it may be that it is merely using the material already stored up by its past experiences. But the next discovery is that the farther it removes itself from objects, the more powerfully, surely, rapidly can the mind work, with a swifter clarity, with a victorious and sovereign detachment. This is an experience which tends to contradict the scientific theory that mind can withdraw the senses into itself and bring them to bear on a mass of phenomena of which it is quite unaware when it is occupied with external phenomena. Science will naturally challenge these as hallucinations. The answer is that these phenomena are related to each other by regular, simple and intelligible laws and form a world of their own, independent of thought acting on the material world. Here, too, Science has this possible answer that this supposed world is merely an imaginative reflex in the brain of the material world and to any arguments drawn from the definiteness and unexpectedness of these subtle phenomena and their independence of our own will and imagination, it can always oppose its theory of unconscious cerebration and we suppose unconscious imagination. The fourth discovery is that mind is not only independent of external matter, but is master; it cannot only reject and control external stimuli, but can defy such apparently universal material laws as that of gravitation and ignore, put aside and make nought of what are called laws of nature and are really only the laws of material nature, inferior and subject to the psychical laws because matter is a product of mind and not mind a product of matter. This is the decisive discovery of "Yoga", its final contradiction of materialism. It is followed by the crowning realisation that there is within us a source of immeasurable force, immeasurable intelligence, immeasurable joy far above the possibility of weakness, above the possibility of ignorance, above the possibility of grief which we can bring into touch with ourselves and, under arduous but not impossible conditions, habitually utilize or enjoy. This is what the Upanishads call the Brahman and the primal entity from which all things were born, in which they live and to which they return. This is God and communion with Him is the highest aim of Yoga—a communion which works for knowledge, for work, for delight.

# 39

# INDIAN NATIONALISM

SRI AUROBINDO

## MEANING AND AIM OF SWADESHI MOVEMENT

**The Highest Synthesis**

In the *Bengalee's* issue of the 29th June there is a very interesting article on Nationalism and Expediency, which seems to us to call for some comment. The object of the article is to modify or water the strong wine of Nationalism by a dash of expediency. Nationalism is a faith, the writer admits; he even goes much further than we are prepared to go and claims for Nationalism that it is the highest of all synthesis. This is a conclusion we are not prepared to accept; it is, we know, the highest which European thought has arrived at so far as that thought has expressed itself in the actual life and ideals of the average European. In Positivism Europe has attempted to arrive at a higher synthesis, the synthesis of humanity; and Socialism and philosophical Anarchism, the Anarchism of Tolstoy and Spencer, have been envisaged the application of the higher intellectual synthesis to life. In India, we do not recognise the nation as the highest synthesis to which we can rise. There is a higher synthesis, humanity; beyond that there is a still higher synthesis, this living, suffering, aspiring world of creatures, the synthesis of Buddhism; there is a highest of all, the synthesis of God, and that is the Hindu synthesis, the synthesis of Vedanta. With us today Nationalism is our immediate practical faith and gospel not because it is the highest possible synthesis,

but because it must be realised in life if we are to have the chance of realising the others. We must live as a nation before we can live in humanity. It is for this reason that Nationalist thinkers have always urged the necessity of realising our separateness from other nations and living to ourselves for the present, not in order to shut out humanity, but that we may get that individual strength, unity and wholeness which will help us to live as a nation for humanity. A man must be strong and free in himself before he can live usefully for others, so must a nation. But that does not justify us in forgetting the ultimate aim of evolution. God in the nation becomes the realisation of the first moment to us because the nation is the chosen means or condition through which we rise to the higher synthesis, God in humanity, God in all creatures, God in Himself and ourself.

**Faith and Analysis**

Because Nationalism is the highest synthesis, it is more than a mere faith says the *Bengalee*, it embodies an analysis, however unconscious or even inadequate, of the actual forces and conditions of life. We do not quite understand our contemporary's philosophy. An unconscious analysis is a contradiction in terms. There may be a vague and ill-expressed weighing of things in the rough, but that is not analysis. Analysis is in its nature a delibeıate intellectual process; the other is merely a perception of things separately or together but without analysis. And analysis is not inconsistent with faith, but must accompany it unless the faith is merely superstition. Every faith is to a certain extent rational, it has its own analysis and synthesis by which it seeks to establish itself intellectually; so has Nationalism. What the *Bengalee* means is apparently that our faith ought not to exceed our observation; in other words, we ought to calculate the forces for and against us and if the favourable forces are weak and the unfavourable strong, we ought to move with caution and hesitation. Now that is a very different question which has nothing to do with the philosophical aspect of Nationalism but with the policy of the moment. Our position is that Nationalism is our faith, our *Dharma*, and its realisation the duty which lies before the country at the present moment. If so, it is a thing which must be done and from which we cannot turn merely because the forces are against us. If we rely on an analysis of forces, what is it we arrive at ? It was only

yesterday that there was a series of articles in the *Bengalee* which sought to establish the proposition that the Hindus on whom the burden of the movement has fallen are a doomed and perishing race. The writer arrived at that conclusion by patient and exhaustive analysis. What else does analysis show us ? It shows us one of the most powerful Governments in the world determined not to part with its absolute control and aided for the present by a large part of one of the chief communities in India. On the other side a people unequipped, unorganised, without means or resources, divided within itself, a considerable portion of it inert, and even in the educated class a part of it unsympathetic, afraid, insisting on caution and prudence. Shall we then turn from our work ? Shall we deny God ? Rationality demands that we should. And if we do not, it is simply because it would be to deny God, because we have 'mere' faith, because we believe that God is within us, a spiritual force strong enough to overcome all physical obstacles, weaknesses, disabilities, that God is in the movement, that He is its leader and guides it, that we belong to the world and the future and are not a spent and dying force. This faith we hold because we understand the processes by which He works and can therefore see good in evil, light in the darkness, a preparation for victory in defeat, a new life in the apparent process of disintegration.

**Mature Deliberation**

That the movement is from God has been apparent in its history. Our contemporary does not believe that God created and leads the movement, he thinks that Sj. Surendra Nath Banerji created it and leads it. Only so can we explain the extraordinary statement, "every step that has been taken in construction has been preceded by mature deliberation". Is this so ? Was the Swadeshi movement preceded by mature deliberation ? Everbody knows that it was scouted by our leaders and, if it had been again proposed to them a month before it suddenly seized the country, would still have been scouted. It came as a flood comes and swept away everybody in its mighty current. Was the Boycott preceded by mature deliberation ? Everybody knows how it came, advocated by obscure mofussil towns, propagated by a Calcutta vernacular newspaper, forced on leaders who shrank from it with misgivings, accepted with tremors and even then would only have used it for a

short time as a means of pressure to get the Partition reversed. Everybody knows how it spread over Bengal with the impetuosity of a cyclone. Was the National Education movement preceded by mature deliberation ? It came suddenly, it seems unexpectedly, unwelcome to many and still demand with a half-hearted support by the leaders of the country. That is what we mean by saying that God is in the movement and leads it. It is a greater than human force, incalculable, sudden and impetuous, which has swept over the country shattering and recreating, transforming cowards into heroes, lovers of case into martyrs, self-seekers into self-sacrificers, changing in a few years the whole outlook, temper and character of a nation.

**The Importance of the Individual**

It is not surprising that with these ideas the *Bengalee* should deprecate the call for continued courage and self-sacrifice which has been made by Sj. Aurobindo Ghosh in his speech at Jhalakati, for to that speech the article is a controversial answer. The cry for expediency resolves itself into an argument for individual prudence on the port of the leaders. "It seems to us to be a fatal idea that for the progress of the nation individuals are not necessary or that particular individuals are not more necessary than other individuals". And the writer asks whether an organ is justified in cutting itself off for the sake of organism, and immediately answers his own question partially by saying, yes, when the interests of the organism require it. The metaphor is a false one; for the individual is not an organ, he is simply an atom and atoms not only can be replaced but are daily replaced, and the replacement is necessary for the continued life of the organism. In times of stress or revolution the replacement is more rapid, that is all. Whatever the importance of particular individuals,—and the importance of men like Sj. Aswini Kumar Dutta or Sj. Krishna Kumar Mitra is not denied by any man in his senses and was not denied but dwelt upon by the speaker at Jhalakati'—they are not necessary, in the sense that God does not depend upon them for the execution of His purposes. Our contemporary does not expressly deny God's existence or His omnipotence or His providence, and if he accepts them, he his debarred from insisting that God cannot save India without Sj. Surendra Nath Banerji or Sj. Aswani Kumar Dutta, that he is unable to remove them and find other instruments or

that their deportation or disappearance will defer the fulfilment of His purposes to future centuries.

**The Fatalism of Action**

Our contemporary does however seem to doubt these qualities in the Ruler of all. He holds it to be a fatal doctrine "that we are none of us necessary, that everything that is happening or can happen is for the best, that God is seeking His fulfilment in inscrutable ways, that He will Himself lead the country when our prominent men are removed from the arena." This he says, is fatalism, and by flinging the world fatalism at Sj. Aurobindo, he thinks he has damned his position. The word fatalism means usually a resigned passivity, and certainly any leader who preached such a gospel would be injuring the Country. That would be indeed a fatal doctrine. But our contemporary admits that it is a fatalism of action and not of inaction he is censuring, he blames the speaker for advocating too much action and not too little. All that the "Fatalism" censured means is a firm faith in the love and wisdom of God and a belief based on past experience that as it is His purpose to raise up India; therefore, everything that happens or can happen just now will tend to the fulfilment of His purpose. In other words, there is now an upward tendency in the nation with an immense force behind it and, in such conditions it is part of human experience that the force makes use of every event to assist the progress of the tendency until its contribution to human development is fulfilled. That is the idea of *Kala* or the Zeitgeist working, and, put religiously, it means that God being Supreme Wisdom uses everything for His Supreme purposes and out of evil cometh good. This is true of our private life as every man of spiritual insight can testify; he can name and estimate the particular good which has come out of every apparent evil in his life. The same truth applies to the life of the nation.

**God's Ways**

When it is said that God's ways are inscrutable, it is simply meant that man's reason, on which the *Bengalee* lays so much stress, is not always sufficient to estimate at the time the object He has in a particular dispensation of calamity or defeat. It seems to be nothing but calamity and defeat and it is only afterwards that light of reason looking backwards is able by the illumination

of subsequent events to understand His doings. Therefore, we must have faith and an invincible faith or else the calamities will be too great for our courage and endurance. Is this a false doctrine or a fatal doctrine ? Will the country be injured by it or helped by it ? Srijut Aurobindo never said that God would step into fill the place of Srijut Aswini Dutt or others removed from the arena. His position was that God has been driving on the movement from the beginning and was always the leader when they were with us and remains the leader when they are taken from us.

**Adequate Value**

The *Bengalee* insists however that individual life is quite as sacred *for its own purposes* as national life for its higher purposes, that the nation must get *adequate value* for such sacrifice that the individuals make, and that great men must protect themselves from danger because their removal at a critical moment may mean incalculable injury. We deny that individual life is as sacred as national life; the smaller cannot be so sacred as the greater, self cannot be so sacred as others, and to say that it is quite as sacred for its own purposes is to deify selfishness. Our lives are useful only in proportion as they help others by example or action or tend to fulfil God in man. It is not true that my ease is sacred, my safety is sacred, or my self-interest is sacred. This if anything is "a fatal doctrine." We do not deny that sacrifice cannot be an end to itself; no one is so foolish as to advance any such proposition. But when the *Bengalee* argues that the individual must demand *adequate* value for every sacrifice he makes on the national altar, it shows a complete inability to appreciate the nature of sacrifice and the laws of politics. If we had acted in this Baniya spirit, we should never have got beyond the point at which we stood four years ago. It is by unhesitating, wholehearted and princely sacrifices that nations affect their liberty. It has always been so in the past and the laws of nature have not altered and will not alter to suit the calculating prudence of individuals. A great man is valuable to the nation and he should guard himself but only as far as he can do so without demoralising his followers, ceasing from the battle or abdicating his right to leadership. He should never forget that he leads and the nation looks upto him as a fountain of steadfastness, unselfish sacrifice and courage. Expediency means national expediency, not individual expediency.

Even so it must be the larger expediency which makes great sacrifices and faces great risks to secure great ends. Statesmanship is not summed up in the words prudence and caution, it has a place for strength and courage.

**Expediency and Nationalism**

We have met the arguments of the *Bengalee* at some length because we hold the teaching in this article to be perilous in its tendencies. There is plenty of selfishness, prudence, hesitating calculation in the country, plenty of fear and demoralisation in the older generation. There is no need to take thought and labour for increasing it. Steadfastness, courage, a calm and high spirit are what we now need, wisdom to plan and act, not prudence to abstain from action. Nationalism tempered by expediency is like the French despotism tempered by epigrams. The epigrams undermined the despotism, the expediency is likely to undermine and in some quarters is visibly undermining the Nationalism. More "incalculable Injury" is likely to be done by teaching of this kind at this juncture than by the removal of any great man, however prominent and inspiring his greatness.

**An Unequal Fight**

Our controversy with the *Bengalee* is like a conflict between denizens of two different elements. Not only has our contemporary the advantage of prompt reply, but he has such a gaint's gulp for formulas, such a magnificent and victorious method of dealing with great fundamental question in a few sentences, such a generous faculty for clouding a definite point with sounding generalisations that he leaves us weak and gasping for breath. However in our own feeble way we shall try to deal with the several points he has raised. Their importance must be our excuse for the length of our reply. One great difficulty in our way is that our contemporary for the convenience of his argument chooses to attribute to us the most ridiculous opinions born out of his own prolific brain and generous facility in reading whatever he chooses into other people's minds. He thinks, for instance, that by seeing a special manifestation of Divine Power and Grace in a particular movement we mean to shut God out from all others. This is a fair sample of the "inconsistencies" which the *Bengalee* is always finding in his own brain and projecting into ours. If we have to

guard ourselves at every point against such gratuitous misconceptions, argument becomes impossible. Neither space nor patience will allow of it.

**God and His Universe**

The *Bengalee* takes as its fundamental position that God is Absolute, Eternal and Universal in all movements and not limited to any particular. Very true, but a vague statement of abstract truth like this leads nowhere beyond itself. What are the concrete implications in this generalisation ? God is not only the Absolute Eternal and Universal in his own essence, but He manifests in the relative, transient and particular. The Absolute is an aspect of Him necessary for philosophical completeness; but if He were only Absolute, then this phenomenal world would be only Maya, God *akarta* and all action purely illusory. If He were only Eternal we might regard this world as something not full of Him, but a separate creation which may or may not be subject to His immediate action. It is because He is the Universal that the clarified vision sees Him in every being and every activity. As the Absolute He stands behind every relative, as the Eternal He supports every transient and assures the permanence of the sum of phenomena; as the Universal He manifests Himself in every particular.

**The Scientific Position**

Still, there is the question, how does He manifest Himself ? There is a school which holds that He has once for all manifested Himself in certain eternal and universal laws and has no other connection with the universe. This was the attitude definitely taken by the *Indian Social Reformer* when it ridiculed Sj. Aurobindo Ghose's Uttarpara speech. God does not speak to men through their inner selves in Yoga or otherwise, there is no way of communion between Him and humanity, there is no special action of His power or grace anywhere. He speaks to men only through His laws; in other words, He does not speak to them at all. He does not act personally, He acts through His laws; in other words, He does not act at all, His laws act. This is an intelligible position and it contains the whole real quarrel between Science and Religion. Science does not as yet recognise God. Taking its stand on material senses and logical argument from

external phenomena it demands proof before it will admit His existence. It has plenty of proof of Shakti, of Prakriti, of Nature; it sees none of the Purusha or any room for His existence. If He exists at all, it must be an Impersonal Being immanent in but different from Force and Energy and Himself inactive; but even of this there is no proof. Religion holds that God is not only impersonal but personal, not only Purusha but Prakriti, not only Being but Shakti; He is all. For the proof of its position Religion appeals to something higher than logic or the senses, to spiritual experience and the direct knowledge drawn from the secret discipline it has developed in most parts of the world.

**Force Universal or Individual**

It is not clear whether our contemporary recognises any personality in its Universal God or only recognises Him in all movements as natural Law. We hold that He manifests Himself in particulars not as Law, which is only a generalisation of the methods by which He acts, but as Shakti working for the Purusha. He puts Himself as force, energy, motive-power into every particular. It is perfectly true that every particular contains Him, but there are differences in the force of His manifestation. This is obvious in individuals. The strength of every particular individual is the strength of God and not his own, because every particular strength is merely a part of the Universal force and it is really the Universal force and not the individual strength that is acting. But in living beings when consciousness has become separate, the individual is allowed to suppose himself to be strong in his own strength. He is not really so. God gave the strength and He can take it away. He gave it power to act and He can baffle its action of the fruits the individual sought and turn it to quite other results. This is so common an experience that we do not see how any man with the power of introspection can deny it. Only at ordinary times, when things seem to be moving according to our calculations, we forget it, but on certain occasions He manifests Himself with such force either in events or in our own actions that unless we are blinded by egoism or by infatuation we are compelled to perceive the universality of the force that is acting and the insignificance of the individual. So also there are particular movements in particular epochs in which the Divine Force manifests itself with supreme power shattering all human calculations, making a

mock of the prudence of the careful a statesman and the scheming politician, falsifying the prognostications of the scientific analyser and advancing with a vehemence and velocity which is obviously the manifestation of a higher than human force. The intellectual man afterwards tries to trace the reasons for the movement and lay bare the forces that made it possible, but at the time he is utterly at fault, his wisdom is falsified at every step and his science serves him not. These are the times when we say God is in the movement, He is its leader and it must fulfil itself however impossible it may be for man to see the means by which it will succeed.

**Faith and Deliberation**

The next point is the question of mature deliberation. The *Bengalee* here tries to avoid confession of its error by altering the meaning of language. The nature deliberation of which it spoke applies only to particular acts and, even then it was not one man or a dozen but the whole self-conscious part of the country which took part in these mature deliberations. The facts do not square with this modified assertion. The majority even of the particular steps taken in pursuance of the ideas which swept over the country were not taken in pursuance of mature deliberation but were the result in some men of a faith which defied deliberation and in others of a yielding to the necessity of the movement. The National Council of Education came into existence because Sj. Subodh Chandra Mullik planked down a lakh of rupees and was followed by the zamindar of Gauripur, in act of faith, because the Rangpur school-boys and their guardians refused to go back on their action in leaving the Government school and established a school of their own, also an act of faith, and because some leading men of the country recognised that something must be done on the spot to prevent the honour of the nation being tarnished by abandonment of this heroic forlorn hope while others thought it a good opportunity to materialise their educational crotchets. Was this mature deliberation or a compound of faith, idealism and risky experiment ? The Boycott came into existence because of the wrath of the people against the Partition and the vehement advocacy of a Calcutta paper which, supported by this general wrath, bore down the hesitations of the thinkers, the politicians and the economists. Almost every step towards

Swadeshi, every National school established was an act of faith in the permanence of the movement, a faith not justified by previous experience. These were acts of boldness, often of rashness, not of mature deliberation. Mature deliberation implies that having consulted the lessons of past experience and weighed the probabilities of the future and the possibilities of the present, we take the step which seems most prudent and likely to bring about sure results. The Bombay millowners deliberated maturely when they said, "This movement born of a moment's indignation will pass like the rest; go to, let us raise our prices and make hay while the sun shines." The leaders deliberated maturely when they said, "The rush towards National Education will not last and if encouraged it will mean the destruction of private institutions and the payment of a double tax for education." So they stopped the students' strike, withheld their moral support and by this mature deliberations put, like the Bombay millowners, almost insuperable obstacles in the way of the movement. It was the unconsciously prepared forces in the country that made their way inspite of and not because of the mature deliberation. It was a minority convinced of the principles of self-help and passive resistance, full of faith, careless of obstacles, believing in the force of ideas, and not the whole self-conscious portion of the country, which mainly contributed, by its eloquence, logic, consistence, self-sacrifice and the impact of its energy on the maturely-deliberating majority, to the permanence of the movement. These are the facts. As for the conclusion from them we never made the absurd statement evolved out of the *Bengalee's* imagination that God is everywhere except in the conscious and deliberate activities of men. What we say and hold to is that the Divine force manifests itself specially when it effects mighty and irresistable movements which even the ignorance and egoism of man is obliged to recognise as exceeding and baffling his limited wisdom and his limited strength.

**Our "Inconsistencies"**

A third point is the proposition that out of evil cometh good and that everything that happens or can happen is of the best. Here our contemporary finds an inconsistency for did we not say that *just now* everything works for the upraising of India because there is an upward trend which all forces assist. "Curiously enough," he says, "the writer thinks the two propositions

identical." Curiously enough, we do. We say that just now India is being raised up and everything tends to God's purpose in raising her up, even calamity, even evil, even error. He uses them for His purpose and out of evil bringeth good. We said "just now," because it is not true that God has always raised up India and always there has been an upward trend; sometimes He has cast her down, sometimes there has been a downward trend. Even that was for the good of India and the world as we shall take occasion to show. Where then is the limitation or the inconsistency? The limitation in the phrase "just now" applies to the upward trend, to the particular instance and not to the principle that out of evil cometh good, which is universal and absolute.

**Good out of Evil**

It is strange to find a philosopher like our contemporary parading in this twentieth century the ancient and hollow platitude that such a doctrine, however true, ought not to be applied to individual conduct because it will abrogate morality and personal responsibility. This is a strange answer, too, to an argument which simply sought to confirm the faith and endurance of our people in calamity by the belief that out confidence in our future was not mistaken and that these calamities were necessary for God's high purpose. The evil we spoke of was not moral evil, but misfortune and calamity. But we do not shrink from the doctrine that sin also is turned to His purpose and, as far as that goes, we do not see how such a doctrine abrogates morality. The wisdom and love of God in turning our evil into His good does not absolve us of our moral responsibility. Our contemporary shows this want of connection between the two positions himself when he asks whether one should not in that case play the traitor in order to assist the progress of the tendency. The gibe shows up the absurdity not of our faith but of his argument. Our selfish or sinful acts, our persistence in ignorance or perversity are for the best in this obvious sense that God makes out of them excellent material for the work He is about, which always tends to the good of humanity. The persecution of Christianity by the powers of the ancient world was utterly evil, but it was for the best; without it there could not have been the noble reaction of sublime and exalted suffering which finally permeated the mind with the impulse of sacrifice for high ideals, and by introducing a mental

soil fit for the growth of altruism sowed the seeds of love, sweetness and humanity in that hard selfish lust-ridden European world. The *Bengalee* no doubt would have counselled the Christian martyrs not to be so rash and unreasoning but to demand from God a balance of profit and loss for each individual sacrifice and only after mature deliberation decide whether to obey the voice of God in their conscience or offer flowers to Venus and divine homage to Nero.

**Loss of Courage**

But the question of self-sacrifice needs separate handling and we have not the space to deal with it in this issue as its importance deserves. The *Bengalee* counters our suggestion about the superfluity of prudence and the instinct of self-preservation at the present moment by the assertion that there is an excess of unreasoning rashness. That is a question of standpoint and vocabulary. But when the *Bengalee* goes on to tay that when evil results ensure from their imprudence the rash and unreasoning lose heart and become unbelievers, we have a right to ask to whom the allusion is directed. In the young, the forward, the men stigmatised by the *Bengalee* as rash and unreasoning we find no loss of courage or faith but only a hesitation on what lines to proceed now that the old means have been broken by repressive laws. Among the older men we do indeed find a spirit of depression for which we blame those who in the face of the repressions drew in their horns out of mature deliberation and allowed silence and inactivity to fall on the country. But these were never men of faith. We who believe in God's dispensations have not lost heart, we have not become unbelievers. Our cry is as loud as before for Swaraj and Swadeshi; our hearts beat as high.

**Intuitive Reason**

However there is a hope for our contemporary. He has admitted in his idea of rationality the place of the intuitive reason, and it is precisely the intuitive reason, speaking oftenest in the present stage of human development, through the inspiration that wells up from the heart, which is the basis of faith and exceeds the limit of the logical intellect. For this is the highest form of faith when the intuitive reason speaks to the heart, captures the emotions and is supported by reflection. This is the faith that

moves mountains and there is nothing higher and more powerful except the yet deeper inner knowledge.

**The Bengalee and Ourselves**

The *Bengalee* has answered our facts and opinion with its facts and comments. Unfortunately, we find in our contemporary's answer all comment and no fact. For the most part he is busy trying to prove that we are really inconsistent and contradictory, or, if he misunderstood us, it was due to our uninstructed use of language. In the first place we did not expressly say that we saw God in everything and only specially in special movements. Of course, we did not. As we pointed out we could not be always guarding ourselves against gratuitous misconceptions, and the omnipresence of God is such an obvious fact that it has not to be expressly stated. It is curious that our contemporary's powerful intelligence seems still unable to grasp the point about leadership. If the movement were the result of human calculation or guided by human calculation, or even if every constructive step were the result of mature deliberation, there would be no point in insisting that the movement was created and led (we beg pardon, we mean specially created and led,) by God and not by human wisdom. We pointed out that none of these statements could be advanced in the face of the facts, and our contemporary has not been able to meet our arguments; he has simply restated his previous unsupported assumption. Secondly, we were unfortunate enough to use in one place the word "His" where our contemporary thinks we should have used word "that". With all submission we think our language was perfectly clear. We said His purpose and we meant His purpose, the purpose of raising up India. Then again we were unfortunate enough to indulge in an ironical repetition of our contemporary's phrase "mere" faith, within commas inverted and our contemporary with pretentious seriouness insists on taking this as our own epithet and seriously meant. We have pointed out that in our idea of faith it includes the logical analysing reason, it includes experience and exceeds it. It exceeds logical reason because it uses the higher intuitive reason, it exceeds experience because experience often gives the balance of its support to one conclusion where faith using intuition inclines to the opposite conclusion.

## GOD AND MAN

Our contemporary does not understand why we wrote God and the universal force or why we insisted on the special manifestation of the divine force as opposed to its veiled working through human egoism. We did so because we had to oppose the excess of that very egoism. We have not risen to the heights of Monism from which he scoffs benignly at our dualism. It may be the final truth that there is nothing but God, but for the purposes of Life we have to recognise that there is dualism in the underlying unity. It profits nothing to say, for instance; "The Divine Force wrote two columns of Facts and Comments the other day in the *Bengalee*". God reveals Himself not only in the individual where He is veiled by ignorance and egoism, but in Himself. When the *Bengalee* sees no alternative to man's self-conscious action except unconscious action, it is under the influence European materialism which sees only conscious creatures in an unconscious inanimate Nature. The Divine Force is not unconscious but conscious and intelligent and to see Him as a conscious power only in men is to deny Him altogether. When again our contemporary uses a misapplication of the truth of Adwaita to justify the deifying of his own reason, he is encouraging practical atheism while taking the divine name in vain. God manifests Himself in everything, He manifests himself in our reason, therefore, let us forget God and rely on our own human calculations. That is the train of argument. What is the use of relying on God ? Let us look to our own safety. What is the use of being brave in the hour of peril ? If our leader goes, the movement stops. *Mam anusmara yudhya ca* is the motto of the Karmayogin. God manifests himself in the individual partially, but He stands behind the progress of the world wholly. We are bound to use our own intellects, we cannot help it if we would, but we must remember that it is a limited intellect and be prepared for the failure of our schemes and plans, for calamity, for defeat, without making these things an excuse for abandoning His work, laying our principles on the shelf or sending out a cry to discourage steadfastness and self-sacrifice. Our plans may fail, God's purpose cannot. That is why we laid so much stress on the fact that this has been a movement which, as man in the street would say, has led itself, in which individuals have been instruments and not the real shapers and leaders. We have faith and we

believe in the great rule of life in the Gita, "Remember me and fight." We believe in the mighty word of assurance to the bhakta, *maccittah sarvadurgani matprasadat tarisyasi,* "if thou reposest thy heart and mind in Me by My grace thou shalt pass safe through all difficulties and danger." We believe the Yoga of the Gita will play a large part in the uplifting of the nation, and this attitude is the first condition of the Yoga of the Gita. When anybody tries to discourage our principle in this attitude, we are bound to enter the lists against him. We recognise that to argue with those who have only opinions but no realisation is a hopeless task, since it is only by entering into communion with the Infinite and seeing the Divine Force in all that one can be intellecually sure of the conscious action. But at least we can try to remove the philosophical delusions and confusions which mislead men from the right path and veil European materialism under generalities drawn from Vedanta.

**A Hint of Change**

The end of our long waiting for the advent of strength into the hearts and minds of the people may yet be distant, but one sign of an approaching change is growing more and more manifest, the intense yearning for a field, an outlet, a path open to the pent up activities of an awakened nation. Arising from long sleep and torpor, the nation threw itself with energy into a field of activity which seemed immeasurably vast and full of a glorious promise. One would have said that no one could stop that mighty outpouring of enthusiasm, unselfishness and heaven aspiring force. But there was a flaw, a source of weakness. Our past defects, hesitations, timidities, weaknesses, vices, arrogance, lightheadedness, selfishness, scepticism, inconsistency, our readiness to succumb to difficulties, to despair at the first check,—all these things were in us, trampled down by the inrush of higher feelings and a greater and nobler energy, but not thrown out, not utterly replaced. The nation had entered headlong into a wonderful sadhana, but without knowledge, without the deliberate *sankalpa,* the requisite *diksa.* It was the only way it could be begun. But the sadhak has to have *cittasuddhi* before he can attain realisation; he must cleanse his bosom of much perilous stuff. That cleansing is done partly by replacing the lower feelings by the higher, cowardice by courage, hatred by love, weakness by strength, partly

by working out the evil in imagination or action and rejecting it as it comes up into the mind or the life. It was the first process that took place in the beginning of the movement, it is the second that is now in progress. In the first years of the movement a nation of cowards became heroes, sceptics became blind believers, the light-minded full of serious purpose, men eaten up by selfishness martyrs and ascetics, waverers full of tenacity, the low, loose and immoral inspired by a high and generous idealism and purity. But the work was not complete. In the groundwork of the new nation the old evil stuff lingered, and therefore God trampled our work to pieces in order to have it out, so that it might be seen, recognised and rejected. It was that work the repressions and reforms have come to do, and it is almost done. Had we gone in our first victorious rush, unhampered and undefeated, we would have entered the kingdom of Swaraj with an imperfect national character, full of temporarily repressed vices which would have come to the surface as soon as the great stimulus of a successful struggle had been removed, and the last state of the nation might have been worst than its first; at any rate there would have been infinite troubles, reverses and disasters for the liberated nation, such as are in store for a nation like Persia where the struggle for freedom has not been sufficiently intense, arduous and complicated in its features to purify the people and build its character. It is well to have done with our troubles, reverses and defeats before the end is gained, so that we may enter our kingdom pure and strong. We ought now to be able to recognize what it was that has made us fail in the hour of trial; for there can be no doubt that we have partially failed. To recognize the defects is to reject them, and with the will to rise, will come the means which will help to raise us. The spirit of the nation is rising again. Only it must be clearly recognized that old outlets are not the right ones. Solid and thorough work, self-discipline by means of noble and orderly action, this is the path by which we shall arrive at a higher national character and evolution.

## INDIAN NATIONALISM : THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT

### National Unity—Partition Day

Partition Day comes round again on this 16th October. Last year executive caprice prevented the day from being celebrated

with all its accustomed ceremonies; this year, there is not likely to be a similar interference, and we trust that all the usual circumstances of the occasion will be observed without any abridgement. On the 7th of August, the official organisers were afraid to start the procession from the College Square; now that Sj. Surendranath is with us, we trust that no such unworthy considerations will be allowed to mar the fullness and imposing nature of this feature. From no other centre in Calcutta is an effective procession at all probable and it was seen last August that the only result of trying to change it was to break up the procession and mar its effect. The two most essential features, however, of the Partition Day are the Rakhi Bandhan and the reading of the National Proclamation; it is above all a day of the declaration of Bengal's indivisible unity and these two functions are for that reason the very kernel of the observances. It is unfortunate that the celebration should coincide this year with the Puja sales, as this may interfere with the closing of the shops, which is the most salient sign of protest against the dismemberment. We hope the official organisers are taking steps to counteract this unfavourable factor.

**The People's Proclamation**

In our last issue we commented on the importance and significance of the people's Proclamation as part of the celebration of the 16th October. It is curious irony of Fate that, immediately afterwards, it should have been deliberately decided by our leaders to drop the Proclamation from the proceedings. We do not know in what particular quarter of that quaking morass of fears and apprehensions which is called the mind of our leaders, or in answer to what particular touch the tremor arose which has manifested itself in this amazing excision. The multilatcd copy of last year's circular which is disgraced by this act of inexplicable backsliding and timidity, comes out under the signatures of Sjts. Surendranath Banerji, Motilal Ghose and Rai Jotindranath Chaudhuri. We are certainly astonished to find Moti Babu's name under such a document and we can only assume that it was asserted without getting his consent or that consent was asked and given by telegraph from Deoghur without his being informed of the omission. Originally, there was another honoured name in that place, but the gentleman who bore it declined to sign unless the omission was rectified, and Moti Babu's name seems to have been

thrust in at the last moment in order to fill up the gap,—a proceeding not very complimentary to one of the first living names in Bengal. Nor do we quite understand how Rai Jotindranath Chaudhuri induced himself to be a consenting party to the omision, if indeed he knew of it. Be that as it may, the Nationalist leaders will do their duty in opposing this act of culpable weakness. But we are curious to know how the people will take it. Their attitude will be some sign of the present attitude of the political thermometer. The tone and temper of the movement showed a distinct rise till the Hughly Conference, subsequently it seems to have been sinking. And no wonder, with such leadership. Even a nation of strong men led by the weak, blind or selfish, becomes easily infected with the vices of its leaders. And the strength of Bengal though immensely increased, is not yet the perfect and tempered steel that it must become, hard as adamant and light in the lifting.

**Union Day**

The 16th October is generally known as the Partition Day, and it is inevitable that, so long as the administrative division stands, this feature should be emphasised. Especially now that the Reforms threaten to make the division in our administrative lives permanent and real, a mournful significance attaches to the celebration this year. It is possible that, before the day comes round again, the fatal complaisance and weakness of leaders and people may have effected the division between East and West Bengal which the hand of Lord Curzon attempted in vain. The Reform drives in the thin end of the wedge, the rules know how to trust to time and national cowardice and interia to do the rest. But if we can overcome the temptation as we overcame the intimidation, the 16th October will take its place among the national festivals of the future under the name of Union Day.

The unity of Bengal was almost complete when Lord Curzon struck his blow; but there were defects, little fissures which might under outward circumstances develop into great and increasing cracks. Lord Curzon's blow devised in a spirit of Machiavellian statesmanship, but delivered in a fit of unstatesmanlike haste and fury, instead of splitting asunder, soldered Bengali unity into a perfect whole. Bengal one and indivisible came into existence on the 16th of October. The indivisibility has yet to be confirmed by

withstanding the covert and subtle pressure of the reformed Councils, but, even if for a moment there is backsliding, the young hold the future and in their hearts Bengal is one and indivisible.

The unity of India has been slowly prepared by the pressure from above and the creation of a reaction from below. It is only by that reaction giving birth to a self-conscious democracy aspirant towards oneness and freedom and reliant on its own manhood that the dream of a united India can be materialised. The publication of the People's Proclamation on the 16th was the first self-conscious utterance of such democracy, as yet imperfect and inchoate but aware of its separate existence and conscious of its potential strength. That democracy is now alive in Bengal and Maharashtra, it is struggling to get existence in Punjab and Madras and, to a slighter extent, in the other provinces. When it is fully awake all over India, the unity of the whole country will be within sight. On the 16th October, in the People's Proclamation, the first condition of a United India was created.

There is yet another unity which is as yet only dimly symbolised in the ceremony of the Rakhi, a unity which cannot come into being until a perfect comradeship in aspiration, in struggle, in suffering shall have been created throughout the length and breadth of the land,—the unity in national comradeship of the children of one mighty Mother, whatever their class or condition,—Indian fraternity based on Indian liberty and Indian equality.

**Shall We Accept the Partition ?**

This may sound a startling proposition to a nation which is perpetually reaffirming its decision never to accept the settled fact. But it rises definitely upon the question of accepting the reforms. We cannot conceal from ourselves the staringly patent fact that if we accept the reforms, we accept the Partition. The new changes are partly meant to confirm the division which every English statesman declares it to be essential to British prestige to prepetuate, and if the older leaders of West Bengal accept the reforms and stand for Sir Edward Baker's Council or allow their followers to stand for it, the sooner the partition resolution is deleted from the proceedings of Provincial and District conferences and the celebration of the 16th October discontinued, the better for our national honesty and sincerity. If the West Bengal leaders, who

under the pressure of public opinion gave up their seats on the old Council and the idea of becoming Honourables in future, join the reformed Council in Calcutta, there is nothing to prevent the East Bengal leaders from joining, Sir Lancelot Hare's Council in the capital of the New Province. If that happens, where will the Anti-Partition agitation be and where the solemn vow of unity ? To solemnly meet once a year and declare that we will never, never accept what we have accepted, would be a farce too hypocritical for the conscience of the most cynical or the intelligence of the most deluded to tolerate. Any revival of the fiction that it is East Bengal which has been partitioned from West Bengal and therefore there is no obligation on the West Bengal leaders to boycott the Councils while the East Bengal leaders are so bound, will not be suffered. But the Moderates have definitely and rigidly excluded political boycott from their programme; yet what is the abstention from the Councils but a political boycott ? If they carry this exclusion to its logical result and accept the reformed Councils, that is the end of the Anti-Partition agitation. Lord Morely's policy will be entirely successful and Mr. Gokhale may still more loudly acclaim him as the saviour of India from a state of anarchy and chaos.

**Boycott—The Boycott Celebration**

A national festival is the symbol of the national vitality. All outward action depends eventually on the accepted ideas and imaginations of the doer. As these are, so is his aspiration; and although it is not true that as his aspiration, so is his action, yet it is true that as his aspiration, so will his action more and more tend to be. If it is the idea that finally expresses itself in all material forms, action, institutions and consummations, it is the imagination that draws the idea out, suggests the shape and gives the creative impulse. Hence, the importance of celebrations like the Seventh of August, especially in the first movements of a great national resurgence. A time may come when the living meaning may pass out of a solemnity or anniversary and leave it a dead from which only the persistence of habit preserves, but that cannot happen until the underlying idea is realised and the imaginative impulse towards creation has victoriously justified itself and exhausted its sources of satisfaction. The ideas which the boycott celebration holds as its roots and the imagination to which it

appeals are not yet even partially satisfied and, until they have confirmed themselves in victorious action and are perpetuated in lasting forms and institutions, it is of the first importance that this great festival should be celebrated in some form or other and, as far as possible, in the form it originally took. There is a meaning in the imaginative conservatism which refuses to part with the cherished pomps and even the details of show and brightness which have always been associated with this day, the procession, the places, the meeting, the flags, music, songs, the vow, the resolution. Any laxness in these minutiae would show a fainting of the imagination which clings to the festival and its underlying ideas and a carelessness in the heart about those emotions without which the idea by itself is always inoperative. This appeal to the imagination and nourishing of the emotions is especially necessary when the outward circumstances are widely different from the cherished hopes and imaginations and the speedy advent of the longed-for future seems to the reason distant or improbable. That is why importance is attached in all countries to ceremonies and festivals. There are many of us who are inclined to speak with contempt of speeches and shows, and there was a time when we too in our impatience of the mere babbler were inclined to echo the cry for silent work. A juster knowledge of human psychology has led us to modify our view on that head. Man is not by nature a silent animal nor in the mass is he capable of work without frequent interchange of speech. Talk is necessary to him, emotion is necessary to him, imagination is necessary to him; without these he cannot be induced to action. This constitutes the supreme importance of the right of free speech and free meeting; this also constitutes the justification of symbolical holidays and festivals. Speech and writings are necessary to the acceptance and spread of the idea without which there can be no incentive to action. Ceremonies help the imagination and encourage to see in the concrete that which cannot be immediately realised. It was out of the gurge and welter of an infinite oratory, thousand-throated journalism, endless ceremonies, processions, national festivals that the appalling strenuous action of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic age in France arose to reconstitute society and transform Europe. Let us not therefore despise these mighty instruments. God has created them and the natural human love for them for very great and abiding purposes. Even in these few years the Ganapati and

Sivaji festivals, instituted by the farseeing human sympathy and democratic instinct of Mr. Tilak, have done much to reawaken and solidify the national feeling of Maharashtra, and we can all feel what a stimulus to the growth and permanence of the movement we have found in the celebrations of the 7th August and the 16th October. They are to us what sacred days are to the ordinary religions. The individual religious man can do without them, collective religion cannot. These are the sacred days in the religion of Nationalism, the worship of God the Mother.

The 16th October is the idea of unity, the worship of the Mother one and indivisible. The 7th of August is the idea of separateness, the worship of the Mother free, strong and glorious. Both these ideas are as yet ideas merely, realised in our faith and aspiration by the shaping imagination, not yet materialised in the world of concrete fact. This, according to our Vedantic ideas, is how the work and things whether in general or particular come into being. The exist first in seed form in the silent and unexpressed idea, in a work of deep sleep where there is as yet no action of thought or deed, only the inert, inoperative idea. Shiva the white and pure, the ascetic the still, contemplative Yogin holds them in himself as Prajna, the Wise One, God ideal. But Shiva is *tamasic* and *rajas* is necessary to induce motion before things can exist. The thing has next to sprote out of the seed and take a volatile and unfixed shape in the psychic world where it waits for a material birth. Here Brahma, the flaming shapeless and many-shaped, holds them in his brilliant vibrating medium of active imagination and thought and by his daughter. Vach, the Goddess speech eldest-born of the world, puts them into shape and body as Hiranyagarbha, God imaginative and therefore creative. Last they take permanent shape and abide in some material body, form, organism. Vishnu there holds them in his fixed and visible cosmos as *Virat,* God practical, until the divine imagination wearies of them and Shiva as destroyer draws them back again, their outward form disintegrated and their supporting imagination dead, into the seed-state from which they emerged. For a long time the idea of unity, the idea of a strong national self-expression were merely sleeping and inoperative ideas held as sounding words rather than possibilities. Still the repetition of the words like the repetitions even mechanical of a powerful mantra, began to awaken the divine force latent in the idea and, however feebly, it began to

stir. But it was not till the 16th of October and the 7th of August that these ideas seized on the faith and imagination of the people and took shape, volatile and unfixed but still shape, as a living aspiration. The day of material realisation is yet distant. Moving to unity we are still divided by external and internal agencies. Moving towards strength and freedom we are still subject to external force and internal weakness. But this we have gained that the purpose and imagination of unity and strength is rooted in the hearts and minds of a great and the most vigorous portion of the young generation, inheritors of the future, beyond the power of force or sophistry to remove. Having secured so much we can go on in the confidence that, whatever now happens to the pioneers, Hiranyagarbha has taken the new ideas into his protection and when that has once happened Virat must inevitably fulfil them.

It is a shortsighted and superficial outlook which sees in the 16th October only the day of mourning for the partition of Bengal or in the 7th August only a commemoration of the Boycott. The Boycott is a symbol, the mourning a symbol. When the weapon of Boycott has done its work, we shall lay it aside, but the 7th August we shall not lay aside, for it is our sacred Day of Awakening. When the Partition is rescinded we shall cease to go into annual mourning, but the 16th October will not fall into oblivion or desuetude, for it is our sacred Day of the Worship of the Invisible Mother. These see the imaginations, these the mighty and creative thoughts and aspirations which we seek to foster by these celebrations. Therefore, we regard the holding of the Boycott Day as a national duty. Let those who scoff at it and talk of the necessity of silent *sadhana*, for we have heard of such, be warned how they desecrate sacred words by using them as a convenient can and try, out of selfish and infidel fears, to thwart in the minds of the young the work which by these celebrations God has been doing.

**The Englishman on Boycott**

The speech of Sj. Bhupendranath Bose at the Boycott celebration and the Open Letter of Sj. Aurobindo Ghose have put the *Englishman* in difficulty. It has been the habit of this paper to lay stress on any facts or suggestions real or imaginary which it could interpret as pointing to violence and so persistently damn the movement as one not only revolutionary in the magnitude

of the changes at which it aims but violently revolutionary in its purposed methods. The speech and the open letter have cut this imaginary ground away from under the feet. As a matter of fact there is nothing new in the attitude of either the Moderates or the Nationalist leader. What they say now they have said always. The Moderate party have always been in favour of constitutional methods which, whatever be the precise meaning of that phrase in a country where no constitution exists, must certainly exclude illegality and violence. The Nationalists on their aside have always, while repudiating the principle that men are under all circumstances bound to obey unjust or injurious laws imposed without national consent, advocated observance of the law in the circumstances of India both on grounds of policy and in the interests of sound national development. Passive resistance to arbitrary edicts and proclamations in order to assert civic rights, test illegal ukases or compel their recall is not breach of the law but a recognised weapon in the defense civic liberty. Yet the *Englishman* chooses to save its face by imagining a change of front in the Boycott policy. There is no change. The Boycott has always been a movement within the law and such it remains. If there have been some individual excesses, that no more detracts from the legality of the movement than the excesses of individual strikers would affect the legality of a strike. The *Englishman* is full of anxiety as to the best way to meet the imagined change of front. With great sapiency it suggests to the Government the free use of deportation, for which it has been for some time clamouring in vain, and threatens the boycotters with an anti-boycott. One does not quite see how this mighty movement could be engineered. If a boycott of Indians by Englishmen is suggested, we would remind our contemporary that in life in this country Indians might conceivably do without Englishmen but Englishmen cannot do without Indians. That is precisely the strength of our position. The misfortune is that we ourselves still fail to realise it.

**Social Boycott**

It seems to be especially the Boycott President's able defence of social boycott as opposed to violent constraint that has alarmed the *Englishman*. Here also there is nothing new. The social boycott is a weapon absolutely necessary for the enforcement of the popular will in this matter, the power of using fiscal law for

the same purpose being in the hands of authorities who have been publicly declared by Lord Curzon to be active parties in British exploitation of the resources of India. It means the coercion of a very small minority by a huge majority in the interests of the whole nation; it consists merely in a passive abstinence from all countenance to the offender,—sending him to Coventry, in the English phrase; it is effective and, if properly applied, instantaneously effectives it involves, as the *Englishman* has been obliged to see, no violence, no disregard of public order, no branch of the peace. The only weapon the *Englishman* can find against it is deportation, and after all you cannot deport a whole town, village or community. The Nationalist Party have always struggled for and often obtained the recognition of the social boycott at various District Conferences and it has been freely and effectively applied in all parts, though mostly in East Bengal. It is gratifying to find the most moderate of Bengali Moderate leaders supporting and justifying it in a carefully prepared and responsible utterance on an occasion of the utmost public importance.

**The Kaul Judgement**

The Kaul Boycott case which has attracted some comment in the Press is one which ought to be drawn more prominently into public notice. The Settlement Patwary of Kaul together with four leading Banias, two Zamindars and a Brahmin of the place were charged by the police with having held a Boycott meeting which endangered the peace of the town. It is alleged that they agreed to impose a penalty upon all persons using foreign sugar after a certain date and a heavier fine on any one importing the commodity. It does not appear that there was any complaint from a single person in the neighbourhood as to any such meeting being held, still less to their being inconvenienced or stopped in their avocations by any action or threatened action on the part of the defendants. But on the *ipse dixit* of the complaining constable the defendants were found guilty and bound over to keep the peace. The defendants themselves denied the meeting and alleged that they took no part in politics and were guiltless of any religious objection to foreign sugar. In itself the case appears to be a judicial vagary of the worst kind. But the remarkable pronouncements of the Sub-divisional officer of Kaithal on the juristic aspects of the case make it of more than local importance.

Mr. Garett in his judgement starts a very surprising metaphysical argument by drawing a nice distinction between legal and non-legal and wrongful acts. Illegal acts are those against which the law provides a penalty either by criminal or civil action. Non-legal acts are those which are contrary to public policy but are left to social opinion to discourage. Wrongful acts, according to Mr. Garett, are those which being neither illegal nor non-legal are yet abhorrent to the moral sense of men of reason. We do not know if this remarkable definition of wrongful acts will be supported by lawyers. But Mr. Garett further improves on these distinctions by assevering on the strength of an Irish judgement that a perfectly legal action becomes illegal when it is done by many persons in combination, provided any one can show that his interests as an individual or as one of a class are aimed at or necessarily injured. In order that we may not be accused of misrepresenting the learned Sub-divisional Officer we quote the words of the judgement. "Without quoting chapter, verse and date I call to mind the judgement of the late Lord Chief Justice of Ireland I believe, Baron Rolleston, in what is known as the Baker's Case. In that case it was held that the Baker had a cause of action against the farmers of the village in which he established a bakery because they combined to boycott his bakery by each establishing a kitchen for the preparation of the bread for themselves and their servants, their motive being simply a difference on political grounds. The Irish farmers did not go so far as the defendants are said to have gone in this case and they in nowise inferred with the baker personally. The illegality of their action consisted in their combining to do an act which if done separately would have been legal. The learned judge observed to the effect that whereas a single man may be left to work out his own salvation when opposed by an individual he could claim protection from a combination. In that case there were no proposals to inflict fines or outcaste, yet the act was held illegal. It is very certain therefore that an act which in violence far outstrips that, is, if not illegal, at least wrongful."

**The Implications in the Judgement**

That is the judgement. It is obvious that these remarkable dicta have very wide implications and if upheld, make every combination harmful to personal or class interests impossible.

under the law. That has been for some time the tendency of magisterial decisions in India. Every action for instance which may be objectionable to a number of Mahomedans is now liable to be forbidden because it is likely to lead to a breach of the peace, and one is dimly beginning to wonder whether the day may not yet come when worship in Hindu temples may be forbidden on that valid ground. Under Mr. Garett's dictum it seems to depend purely on the bias of the judge what action will or will not be allowed by the law. A teetotal judge may easily penalise a party of men going into a public house to drink, because it is an action abhorrent to his moral sense as a man of reason. And certainly it would not be unarguable that such a combined action might very easily lead to a breach of the peace, much more easily than the meeting of a few hundred or thousand men on the Boycott day. By his other dictum every caste decision forbidding a breach of caste rules is a punishable act, every trade strike is a punishable act, every National School Committee is liable to an action under the law for injuring the interests of the local Government School, every bit concern aiming at the extinction in a locality of the retail shopkeeper and the capture of the business commits a wrongful act, or an illegal act—it is not clear which, all Swadeshi, Boycott, National Education movements are objectionable. The Tariff Reform movement itself is only save by being directed against men outside the country, even it is so saved, for after all it affects adversely the middlemen who bring in foreign manufactures. Even if, driven beyond endurance by my dhobi's delays, I combine with some friends to open and patronise a laundry, I can be stopped by a magisterial sympathiser with the rights of the individual. If this is Irish law, all we can say is that it is very Irish indeed and we do not yearn to have it imported into India. The object of the learned Magistrate was no doubt to aim a blow at the Swadeshi movement which is probably abhorrent to his moral sense as a man of reason. The Sessions Judge has refused to interfere with the discretion of the executive, but there is more here concerned than the discretion of the executive. There is a very original and far-reaching elucidation of the law behind the executive discretion. We hope that the victimised citizens of Kaul will carry their appeal higher and get a more authoritative pronouncement on the juristic philosophy of the learned Mr. Garett.

**The Social Boycott**

The reason why we have drawn so much attention to this case, is the intimate connection with the question of Social Boycott. We are advocates of this weapon not in all cases, but in circumstances where milder expedients are impotent to prevent a wound to the body social or body politic by refractory or conscienceless individuals who wish to enjoy all the benefits of social existence while disregarding the vital necessities of the society. We are aware of the grave consequence of the misuse of the social boycott to prevent the legitimate exercise by the individual of his free reason and honest conviction. We therefore advocate it only in very serious instances where the whole community is attacked in a vital point and is practically at one in resenting the act as fatally injurious to it. For instance when the turbulent Mahomedans of Eastern Bengal made an organised attack on the property of Hindus and on the honour of Hindu women, the Hindu community of East Bengal would have been perfectly justified in boycotting Mahomedans as servants. Similarly, now that the educated classes of the Hindu community are at one in the belief that the Swadeshi movement supported by Boycott is necessary to the economical existence of their community, to say nothing of the whole nation, they are justified in refusing to have any dealings with those who out of personal and selfish motives deal a blow at that movement by persisting in the purchase of foreign articles. The use of this weapon of self-defence by Hindu castes became hurtful because it was applied without discrimination and not always with honesty. Had it been confined to cases of gross moral depravity destructive of social order, there would have been no revolt against it. The penalising of the pursuit of education in foreign countries and similar blunders recoiled on the caste system and it is notable that communities with a strong democratic common-sense like the Mahrattas have even while adhering to orthodox religion avoided the worst of these errors. But the misuse of a necessary instrument is no argument against its necessary and discriminating use. We hold the use of this instrument, not in all cases but in the most heinous, to be legitimate in protecting the life of the nation.

**A Practicable Boycott**

Boycott is an ideal, like freedom; it means independence in industry and commerce, as freedom means independence in

administration, legislation and finance. But it is not always possible to accomplish the whole of the ideal by the first effort towards it. So long as we cherish the ideal whole and unbroken, we are at liberty to consult the demands of practicability and realise it, not at one rush but by successive approximations, each being the vantage-ground for fresh rush forward. This does not imply slow progress, leisurely and gentleman-like spreading out of the struggle for freedom through five or six centuries in order to avoid the perils of the struggle; it is rather the necessary condition of rapid progress. The force of the hunger for the whole ideal, of impatience with half realisations must remain behind, but the means of each advance must be secured by that which went before.

When the Boycott movement first began, it was the opinion of Mr. Tilak and other Nationalist leaders that the exclusion of foreign goods should be directed against British products first of all. The immediate exclusion of all foreign goods was obviously impracticable. But very soon it became evident that the voice of the whole nation in Bengal and Maharashtra was for the more comprehensive movement, and the leaders wisely put aside their opinion and made themselves simply executors of the national will. Wisely, because at each times there is something divinely inspired in the motions of the national mind which exceeds the human wisdom and statecraft of the individual. It was and remains true that the exclusion of all foreign goods is an impracticable measure in the present economical condition of India. But the comprehensive boycott movement was necessary,—first, in order that the ideal might be stamped deep into the consciousness of the people; and that has been done by the very acts of repression which were largely designed, as admitted by Mr. Hobhouse, to crush the Swadeshi Boycott movement;—secondly, in order that the idea of India's separate and self-sufficient existence as a nation might thoroughly replace the habit of dependence and contented economical servitude which English education and the effacement of political life had induced. That work also is done. The idea of Swadeshi has entered into the very marrow of our thought and feeling. It is therefore time now to consider the practical measures by which boycott may be made gradually and steadily successful.

Boycott is essentially a form of voluntary protection and it

cannot do more than protection does towards the creation of industries. Protection serves two ends; it prevents the infant industry from being strangled in its weak unestablished state by full-grown and powerful competitors, it gives a stimulus to it by assuring it a market. It cannot supply the place of enterprise, business capacity, naturally favourable conditions. It can however mitigate the incidence of natural conditions not entirely but comparatively unfavourable by throwing a countervailing disadvantage into the scale of the more favourably circumstanced competing country. This is the limit of the utility of protection; it is also the limit of the utility of boycott. What boycott could do for the cloth industry, it has done, but for the producer to lean entirely on boycott and expect it to take the place of business enterprise, energy, capacity, the improvement of his goods, is to lay a burden on the national spirit which it is neither possible nor desirable that it should bear. The nation agrees to purchase an inferior indigenous article in place of a superior foreign article, not with the intention that the producer should be excused the necessity of improvement and should be able to force the inferior article on us to all eternity, but solely to give him time to improve his methods, his processes, his machinery, his dexterity, inspite of the competition of his superior rival. It saves him from extinction, it gives him a period of grace; he must use it to reach and outdistance the excellence of his rival's methods and production, and if he neglects this duty he does it at his peril and it is not open to him to carry out against the want of patriotism in the people because they withdraw a support which he has abused. The nation, again, agrees to deny itself necessaries or restrict the quantity of its purchase, not with the intention of permanently lowering its standard of comfort and living a barer and more meagre life, but in order to give time for capital and enterprise to increase the supyly, so that eventually the wants of the nation may be supplied from within. If it is found that there is not an expansion of industry commensurate with the self-denial in the nation and that only a few businessmen are exploiting the national sentiment for their own personal profit, it is idle to expect the boycott to survive. We have noticed the signs of most unhealthy spirit of mutual trade jealousy among Swadeshi millowners, who seem to be under the impression that they are natural rivals for the patronage of the consumer. No single

Indian producer can monopolise the supply necessary for national consumption, nor can even the whole body of Indian producers combined, at present, meet the demand. Our Indian millowner gets nothing by the decline of another; on the contrary, his prosperity is bound up in the prosperity of all other Indian mills; for the maintenance of the boycott, which saved the mill industry at a crisis of its destinies, depends on the increased supply of Swadeshi cloth. Instead of attempting to rise by pressing each other down, it would be far better for the Indian producers to follow the example of English manufacturers and combine for the welfare of the national industry.

The first condition of a successful boycott, therefore, is the organisation of national industry with a view, first, to the improvement and extension of that which exists, secondly, to the opening up of new lines of enterprise. This is largely a work for the producer himself, but there is one duty which the leaders of the national movement can perform and that is to organise information. The nature of the industries that can be profitably opened in India, the unfavourable circumstances, the favourable, the means of obviating or mitigating the former, utilising and improving the latter, the conditions of success, the cost of outlay and management, this is the information that capital and enterprise need; the Swadeshi articles that can be procured, the place of their manufacturer, their price, quality and supply, this is the information needed by the consumer. To organise all this information would be to give a great stimulus to the advance of Swadeshi.

The second condition of a successful boycott is the organisation of supply. It is not possible for everyone to hunt Swadeshi articles to their source and purchase them. There must be supply agency which brings the goods to a near convenient market and, as far as possible, to the doors of the people. The difficulty of supply is grievously felt in many parts of Bengal; but there is no one whose duty it is to consider the difficulty and meet it. Swadeshi is in danger or being stifled under the mass of spurious goods, foreign masking as indigenous, which the dishonest methods of European Commerce pour into the country. There is no one to consider the problem of baffling this flank attack and devise methods of assuring the consumer that he gets the article which he wants. The organisation of a genuine and sufficient supply is the second condition of a practicable Boycott.

These measures will help the growth of Swadeshi, but by themselves they can only partially serve the wider national aim which is the heart of the great movement commenced in 1905, the industrial independence of the Indian people. There is no doubt that the great mass of Indian people cherish this aspiration and would willingly follow any practicable means of bringing it into the list of accomplished ideals. Previous to the great movement in Bengal this idea had been twice put into motion and produced a certain result, but the idea then was absolute abstention from all purchase of articles not genuinely Indian. Such a self-denial may be possible for the individual, it is not possible for the great masses of men. The good sense of the nation therefore qualified the vow of abstinence by the proviso that it should be "as far as possible." This, however, is a vague and fluid phrase. It has to be made precise if the movement is to advance from its purely idealistic character and put on the garb of practicability. Some attempt had been made to define it. The boycott of cloth, salt and sugar was made absolute; machinery, medicines, objects of art and literature were exempted. But this was largely an empirical division based neither on consideration of immediate possibility, nor on a reasoned policy. As a matter of fact the boycott of foreign sugar has hopelessly broken down, the boycott of cloth has had a partial success qualified by the necessity of taking yarn for Swadeshi cloth from England. A more practical definition is necessary.

The first principle we would suggest is to make a clear division between articles of necessity, interpreting the word in a broad sense, and articles of luxury and to have an absolute interdict of the latter unless they are indigenous manufacture. The first reason for the interdict is that many articles of luxury are produced in India, but find it difficult to maintain themselves because they depend on the patroguage of the rich, who are wedded to European vulgarity and want of taste in the appointments in their life. The poorer classes cannot indulge in luxuries; the middle class in the present condition of the country, should not. An organised preference of Swadeshi arts and crafts by the rich would revive and stimulate a great source of national wealth and reopen a field of national capacity. Articles of necessity can be divided into those indispensable for life and a decent existence and those necessary for our work and business. In the former we can always

prefer an inferior but usable indigenous article, in the latter no such self-denying ordinance can be imposed. I cannot be called upon to use an article or implement which cripples my business or puts me at a serious disadvantage with my competitor, merely because it is produced in the country, just as in my own home I cannot be called upon to use a pen which will not write, a lamp which will not give light, a cup which cracks and breaks after a few days' use. But if the home article is usable or if the business implement is only slightly inferior to its foreign rival, then it would be unpatriotic and violation of the boycott oath to prefer the foreign to the indigenous production. On these lines we believe a rational and workable meaning could be put on the proviso "as far as possible" which could not put too great a strain on human nature and could yet form the basis of an effective practical protection of Indian industry. A similar concession would have to be made in the case of Swadeshi articles which are too dear for the purse of the poorer classes, but there is no reason why the richer members of the community should not extend their protection to these industries which are compelled for the present to exceed greatly the foreign cost of production and yet have a future before them.

It will be evident therefore that however far we may carry the boycott individually, there are limits which the mass of men cannot exceed. A considerable number of foreign articles must be purchased even for home consumption, still more for work and business. The question is, cannot this inevitable resort to the foreigner be so regulated as to assist materially the progress of the boycott and prepare the future industrial independence of the nation ? This is the subject we propose to consider in our next issue.

**National Education—National or Anti-national**

We have long noticed with the deepest disapprobation and indignation the equivocal conduct of the National Council authorities with regard to matters of great importance, but we held our peace from unwillingness to hurt an institution established with such high hopes and apparently destined to play an important part in the development of the nation. We can hold our peace no longer. The action of the authorities in forbidding their students to attend a national festival commemorating the inception of the

movement by which the College and council were created,—a prohibition extended by them to the mofussil schools,—is only the crowning act of a policy by which they are betraying the trust reposed in them by the nation, contradicting the very object of the institution and utterly ruining a great and salutary movement. They imagine that by being more servile than the most servile of the ordinary institutions and flaunting their high academical purpose they will save themselves from official repression and yet keep the support of the people. They are wrong. Already there is such deep dissatisfaction with the Council that the mofussil schools are dying of inanition and people are turning away from the new education as differing in no essential from the old. If the authorities persist in their evil course, the public mind will write Anti-national instead of national over their signboard in Bow Bazar and their schools be left empty of students. We shall return to this subject in a future issue.

**The Apostasy of the National Council**

We have received an open letter from some teachers of the Rangpur National school in which they warn the President of the National Council of Education of the evil effects likely to ensure from the recent National Risely circular and protest strongly against the policy underlying it. For reasons of space we are unable to publish the letter. The signatories point out that the movement took its birth in the boycott movement and was from the first, closely associated with it in nature and sympathy, that the participation of the young men in the national awakening has been one of the chief causes of its rapid progress and success and that the new policy of the Council not only divorces education from the life of the country but destroys the sympathy and support of the most progressive elements in the nation. It is also pointed out that the donation made by Raja Subodh Malik, from which the practicability of the movement took its beginning and the sacrifices made by the teachers and students of the first established schools were intimately connected with the revolt against the Risely Circular, and yet the same circular is repeated in a more stringent form by the Council itself. There were two conditions attached to Raja Subodh Chandra's gift; the first that maintenance of the Rangpur and Dacca schools, which were created to give shelter to students who persisted in taking part in politics inspite

of all prohibitions, should be assisted out of his donation, and second no form of Government control should be submitted to by the Council. It would be mere hypocrisy to deny that issue of the prohibitory telegrams by the Secretary was the result of the Government circular previous to the seventh of August. We do not know by what morality or law of honour the Council clings to the donation while infringing in the spirit its most vital condition. Perhaps these things also, no less than courage and sincerity, are considered unessential in this new "National" education. We notice that Sj. Hirendranath Dutta and Dacca seems to have openly proclaimed the abjuration of all connection with politics as part of the duty of a "National" school. We must therefore take the divorce of the National Council from the national movement as part of a deliberate and permanent policy, and not, as it might otherwise have been imagined, a temporary aberration due largely to the fact that the President and the most active of the two Secretaries are members of Legislative Councils and therefore parts of the Government which is supposed to have no control over the institution. All that we can now expect of the Council is to be a centre of scientific and technical education; it can no longer be a workshop in which national spirit and energy are to be forged and shaped.

**National Education**

From the beginning of the national movement, inspite of its enthusiasm, force, innate greatness, a defect has made itself apparent, a fatality of insufficient effectiveness has pursued it, which showed that there was a serious flaw somewhere in this brilliant opening of a new era. The nature of that flaw has been made manifest by the period of trial in which, for a time, the real force which made for success has been temporarily withdrawn, so that the weakness still inherent in the nation might be discovered and removed. The great flaw was the attempt to combine the new with the old, to subject the conduct of the resurgence of India to the aged, the cautious, the hesitating men out of sympathy with the spirit of new age, unable to grasp the needs of the future, afraid to apply the bold and radical methods which would alone transform the nation, sweep out, the rottenness in our former corrupt nature and, by purifying Bengal, purify India. It is now apparent that it was the Nationalist element which by its energy, courage,

boldness of thought, readiness to accept the conditions of progress, gave the movement its force and vitality. Wherever that force has been withdrawn, the movement has collapsed. The older men have shown themselves utterly unable either to supply the moral force that would sustain the forward march of the nation or the brain-power to grapple with national problems. In swadeshi the force of sentiment supplied and the persistence of the great mass of silent nationalism in resisting any attempt to draw-back from boycott has preserved the movement to prefer indigenous and boycott foreign goods, but the withdrawal of active Nationalist endeavour has resulted in the stoppage of progress. Swadeshi maintains itself, it no longer advances. National Education languishes because the active force has been withdrawn from it; it does not absolutely perish because a certain amount of Nationalist self-devotion has entrenched itself in this last stronghold and holds it against great odds and under the most discouraging circumstances. A certain amount only,—because part of the active enthusiasm and self-sacrifice which created the movement, has been deliberately extruded from it in obedience to fear or even baser motives, part has abandoned it in disgust at the degeneration of the system in incapable hands and the rest is now finding its self-devotion baffled and deprived of the chance of success by the same incapacity and weakness at headquarters.

The National Council of Education, as it is at present composed, has convicted itself of entire incapacity whether to grasp the meaning of the movent or to preserve or create the conditions of its success. To the majority of the members it is merely an interesting academical experiment in which they can embody some of their pet hobbies or satisfy a general vague dissatisfaction with the established University system. To others the only valuable part of it is the technical instruction given in its workshops. The two or three who at all regard it as part of a great national movement, are unnerved by fear, scepticism and distrust and, by introducing the principles of Chanakya into its public policy, are depriving it or the first condition of its continued existence. . . It is folly to expect that the nation at large will either pay heavily or make great sacrifices merely to support an interesting academic experiment, still less to allow a few learned men to spoil the intellectual development of the race by indulging their hobbies at the public expense. That the people will not support a mere

technical education divorced from that general humanistic training which is essential to national culture, has been sufficiently proved by the failure of Mr. Palit's Technical College to command adequate financial support. Unless the movement is carried on, as it was undertaken, as part of a great movement of national resurgence, unless it is made, visibly to all, a nursery of patriotism and a mighty instrument of national culture, it cannot succeed. It is foolish to expect men to make great sacrifices while discouraging their hope and enthusiasm. It is not intellectual recognition of duty that compels sustained self-sacrifice in masses of men; it is hope, it is the lofty ardour of a great cause, it is the enthusiasm of a noble and courageous effort. It is amazing that men calling themselves educated and presuming to dabble with public movements should be blind to the fact that the success or failure of National Education is intimately bound up with and, indeed, entirely depends upon the fortunes of the great resurgence which gave it birth. They seem to labour under the delusion that it was an academical and not a national impulse which induced men to support this great effort, and they seek to save the institution from a premature death by exiling from it the enthusiasm that made it possible. They cannot ignore the service done by that enthusiasm, but they regard it merely as the ladder by which they climbed and are busy trying to kick it down. They really are shutting off the steam, yet expect the locomotive to go on.

The successful organisation of the Bengal National College in Calcutta was the work of its able and enthusiastic Superintendent aided by a body of young and self-sacrificing workers. The National Council which nominally controlled, in reality only hampered in all that the Council contributed to the system, was its defects. The schools in the mofussil were created by the enthusiasm of the Nationalist party, the propaganda of its leaders and the ardent self-devotion of little bands of workers who gave their self-sacrifice and enthusiasm to lay the foundations. The Nationalist Council has never lifted a single finger to help the mofussil schools, beyond doling out unsubstantial grants to maintain them merely as necessary feeders of the calcutta institution. But unless a movement of this kind is supported by wise organisation and energetic propagandism emanating from an active central authority, it must soon sink under the weight of unsolved problems, unsurmounted difficulties and unamended defects. The

Curriculum of the Council is extraordinarily elaborate and expensive, and involves a great outlay for the formation of library, laboratory, and workshops, and, arranged as it is on the vicious Western system of driving many subjects at a time into the growing intellect, is slow, cumbrous, a strain on the mind of the students, wasteful of time, impossible without an unusual number of good teachers. The financial problem created is one of crushing difficulty, yet the Council think they have done their duty when they have created the problem and do not seem even to dream that there is any call on them to solve it. Even for the Calcutta College in whose maintenance they are more keenly interested, they can only make feeble and spasmodic efforts when, as annually happens, there is a deficit in the budget. The academical problem of teaching so many subjects in so short a time without outdoing the exploits of the Calcutta University as a brain-killing and life-shortening machine, does not seem to occur to those lofty and scheduled minds. They are content with creating the problem and maintaining it by their system of examinations. Even if funds were forthcoming, there would still be the necessity of providing a regular and plentiful supply of teachers trained in an entirely new system of instruction. This urgent problem the Council has systematically ignored, and not even the elementary steps of establishing a Teachers' Training Class in Calcutta and issuing a series of suitable books in the vernacular has been attempted. The only problems which the Council seems willing to grapple with are, first, the problem of supporting National Education without incurring the wrath of the officials and, secondly, the problem of evading the spirit of the clause which forbids it to subject itself to any form of Government control, while observing the letter so as to prevent the invalidation of its endowments.

But if the National Council is content to fail in its duty, the country cannot be content to allow this great educational enterprise to perish. We do not know how or by whom the Council is elected. It seems to have followed the example of so many bodies in India which have started as democratic institutions and ended as close corporations self-electing and self-elected. But if it is impossible to alter the component character of this body and put into it keener blood and clearer brains, some other centre of effort must be created which will undertake to grapple with the problems of National Education, the supply of trained and self-devoted teachers

and of books which will guide them in the imparting of knowledge on new lines, reawakening of interest, hope and enthusiasm in the country, the provision of the necessary funds to the mofussil schools, the forcing on the Council by the pressure of the public opinion of a more rational and a more national system of teaching. But the first condition of success is the reawakening of the national movement all along the line, and this can only be done by the organisation and resolute activity of the National party.

## SWADESHI

**The Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company**

We publish elsewhere an appeal from the promoters of the enterprise which first encouraged Indian energy and capital into the new path many are preparing to follow. The Company, as the pioneer had to face all the difficulties of a novel enterprise of considerable magnitude and it has suffered more than others from competition supported by official sympathy. To Nationalists it will be sufficient to recall the name of Chidambaram Pillai, condemned to a long-term of imprisonment on the strength of police reports, and the plucky struggle made by the Company against overwhelming odds. The Company represents an output of patriotic effort and self-sacrifice such as no other has behind it and it would be a public disgrace if its appeal went unheard.

**A Swadeshi Enterprise**

One of the great weaknesses of the Swadeshi movemennt at present is the case with which, under the stress of necessary, we admit articles as Swadeshi which are to all intents and purposes foreign. It is always therefore an encouraging sign when a real Swadeshi enterprise is started which liberates us from the necessity of such humiliating compromises, especially when they affect articles of daily necessity We take for an instance what we choose to call Swadeshi umbrellas although these are Swadeshi only so far as the labour of fitting the parts together is concerned. Sirdar Rajmachikar of Poona and his brother have done a service to Swadeshi by starting a factory in which all the parts except the iron ribs and stretchers are either made in the factory or in the matter of the cloth, procured from Poona and Bombay mills. The only drawback is the high prices of these articles compared with

the cheapness of the fractionally Swadeshi umbrellas. This we believe, is largely due to the high prices of the cloth produced from the Bombay mills, but the people of Bombay and Poona are taking these umbrellas by the thousand inspite of the difference. We hope Bengal will be as patriotic in this small but important matter. The prices will come down as soon as a sufficient market is created. Meanwhile we must take the Swadeshi article at a sacrifice as we have pledged ourselves to do by any number of vows and resolutions. To replace foreign by indigenous in the objects of daily use is the very life-breath of Swadeshi.

## INDIAN NATIONALISM : THE REFORM SCHEME

### The Minto-Morley Reforms

**The Reforms**

An argument advanced in favour of the Reforms is that, however ineffctual and illusory the expansion of the Legislative Council may be—and the illusory nature of that expansion cannot be seriously denied,—still there is included in the Reform Scheme a measure of local self-government generous, complete and effective, which is well worth acceptance. We are by no means certain how far a substantial measure of local self-government is really contemplated by the Government. It was originally proposed, we believe, to form local self-governing bodies elected by the people and uncontrolled by any official chairman. But many things were originally proposed which seem to have little chance of taking shape as ultimate actualities. We are not aware how far the measure will be carried out, what limitation may be put upon it or whether the control of the official chairman will not be replaced by a higher and more distant but eventually more effective control. We shall have to be thoroughly assured on these points before we can allow that any measure of local self-government included in the measure can outweigh the nugatory character of the main change in the instruments of Government. Unless the local self-government is complete and ungrudging, it may be a convenient measure and to a slight extent strengthen the educated class in the mofussils, but it cannot be a vital measure or even one of the first importance among changes of administrative structure. In any case it cannot outweigh, however full it may be, the disastrous

character of the principle of separate electorates introduced by Lord Morley, intentionally or unintentionally, as the thin end of a wedge which, when driven well home, will break our growing nationality into a hundred jarring pieces. Only by standing aloof from the new councils can this destruction be avoided. This is the point on which we feel bound to lay stress again and again because it is the one vital and effective thing in the new measure, all the rest is mere frippery and meaningless decoration. It would be a poor statesmanship which bought a small and temporary gain by throwing away the future of the nation and the hope of an united India, and posterity will have reason to curse the memory of any popular leader who for the sake either of more gilt on the "gilded shams" or even for a real measure of local self-government, induces the nation to accept the reforms with the separate electorate and special privileges for one community as an essential feature.

**The Limitations of the Act**

There is another point in this connection which destroys the little value that might possibly have attached to the argument from Lord Morley's intentions about local self-government. One peruses the Act in vain for a guarantee of any measure of reform which may be conceded under it to the people except the number of elected and nominated members of the Councils. Everything else, literally everything else, is left to the discretion of Anglo-Indian officialdom. No doubt, the present Secretary of State will have the ultimate decision as to the rules of election, nomination, formation of electorates, acceptance or rejection by the Government of elected members, veto, division, interpellation, etc., and he may decide to put the felt on thickly and copiously. But even if this be done, not one of these things will be assured to us, not one of them but may be reversed by subsequent Viceroys and Secretaries of State without unfringing the meagre provisions of this Act. As for local self-government we fail to find any guarantee either for its introduction or, if introduced,—as, no doubt, Lord Morley will have some slight respect even yet for his own reputation,—for its retention in the future. What is to prevent a future Alexander Mackenzie in the Viceregal seat from so altering any measure that may be given as to render it nugatory ann what is to prevent a future Curzon in the India Office from

confirming this step rearwards ? So far as we have been able to find, nothing at all. We are just where we were before, with concessions granted by arbitrary condescension which may be withdrawn at any moment by arbitrary arrogance. Well may Lord Morley say that this is not a measure of self-government and, if he thought it were, he would not concede the measure. The nationalist party is not opposed to all acceptance of reform; it would welcome and support a measure which would really concede even a minimum of control and provide a means for future expansion while perpetually guaranteeing the small amount conceded; but a measure by which no control is given, no step taken is guaranteed as to permanence and no provision is made for future expansion is one which no thinking man would care to have even apart from other defects, and no practical politician will look at for a moment when coupled with provisions disastrous to the future of the nation.

**Pretentious Shams**

In an unguarded moment for friend and India's, the *Statesman* of Chowringhee, has for once blurted out the truth. While, in common with other Anglo-Indian papers, it descants in strains of dithyrambic eloquence on the magnitude of the reforms the Government in its deep, wise and impossibly sagacious generosity has given and this thrice blessed country has been privileged to receive, it inadvertently admits that the Legislative Councils, as they hitherto existed, were pretentious shams. As we point out in our article this week, the new Councils differ in no way from the old except in being more pretentious. The old were shams because they gave no control to the people while affecting to listen and give consideration to the popular voice, which was, as a matter of fact, only heard to be ignored,—except in very occasional instances which only accentuated the sense of dependence on the caprice of the official governors. The new Councils are of precisely the same character, and the only differences of importance are the non-official majority--so carefully arranged as to secure a permanent popular minority,—the increased number of the elected members, and the facilities given for debate. With a permanent popular minority and the denial of all control, this is a mere heaping of gilt on the surface of the toy. The Indian papers have recognised the nugatory character of the reforms and the tone of cold

dissatisfaction in their comments is very marked. When the Councils begin to work, even the Moderates will realise that the new Councils are not only void of any true principle of popular representation and control, but injurious to the interests of the people.

**The Municipalities and Reform**

Under the new conditions, the Municipalities and District Boards form a substantial part of the electorate and return a certain proportion of the members. We do not think we exaggerate when we say that the only chance of any really independent popular representatives entering the new Councils is provided by these bodies. The University member or one or two of the landholders may occasionally assert independence, but the chances, at present, are in favour of their belonging to that type of representatives who are satisfied if they can pose as representatives of the nation by merely refusing to agree with the Government in all the details of their policy and measure. The one chance of a robust and healthy opposition lies in the election of independent men by the Municipalities and, to a lesser extent, by the District Boards. They will, however, be in a hopeless minority and will always be liable to disqualification by any of the engines provided for that purpose in the rules, if they support their opposition in the Council by agitation in the country. And we have yet to see what changes will be made in the District Boards and Municipalities under the new policy. Great hopes have been entertained that, whatever may be done in the Councils, the Municipalities will be made really free and popular bodies, and, we remember, that expectation was urged at the Hughly Conference as a reason for not rejecting the reforms. We doubt whether this expectation will be any more fruitful than the hopes of a great advance towards popular institutions in the reform of the Councils. Under the new scheme the Municipalities are the only weak point in the Government armour, and we rather fancy the Government will follow the policy of thorough and mend that point as well. Time will show whether we or the Moderates are right. So far we have always been right in these matters and they always been wrong, the new Councils being only the latest of numerous instances during the last few years.

**An Ominous Presage**

The *Indian Daily News* nowadays plays the *Statesman's* abandoned role of the Friend of India. This journal has been recently harping on the necessity of the reform of the Municipalities and throwing out suggestions of the lines on which these reforms should be framed. We cannot imagine anything more ominous, more fatal to the little of self-government that we possess, than these suggested reforms. We pointed in our article on the Reforms that under this scheme the Municipalities were the only weak point in the Government's armour and we hazarded a prophecy that the Government would follow the policy of thorough and mend this vulnerable part. This is precisely what our Anglo-Indian "friend" earnestly and repeatedly calls on them to do without further delay. The principle to be enforced is that same false, vicious and anti-democratic principle of the representation of separate interests which has made the new Reforms a blow straight at the heart of progress instead of an important step in progressive development. It is true that the *Daily News* deprecates separate electorates and advocates official control veiled and occasional instead of official control insistent, naked and unashamed. But we know perfectly well that official control veiled and occasional, as in the universities, can be made as potent and effective a weapon for the suppression of independent action as official control direct and habitual. And if the Europeans, the Mahomedan and the landlord are to predominate in the Municipalities as in the reformed Councils and the representation of the "professional classes" carefully restricted, we do not care whether it is done by separate electorates or by some other equally carefully manipulation of the electoral lists. The result will be the same. The *Daily News* seems to be inspired in its anxiety for reform by two lofty motives, the predominance of the European vote, wealthy but small in numbers, and the distinction of the predominance of the professional men who, under present circumstances, can alone represent educated India. On the Councils the non-official European representation is a small, not in proportion to the number of its constituency, but in its comparative voting power, yet this class is on the whole satisfied, because it not only gets what it knows to be disproportionately large representation but can be sure of the co-operation of the official in furthering its interest. On the Municipalities, if the direct official control disappears,

it will be necessary for the European vote to be dominant so as to prevent a combination of other elements from pushing other interests to the detriment of European privilege or monopoly. The distinction which this journal, in common with other Anglo-Indian papers, draws between men with a real state in the country and educated men, who apparently because of their education have none, shed a flood of light on the kind of friendship which it cherishes for the people of this country.

**The Reformed Councils**

The great measure which is to carry down the name of Lord Morley to distant ages as the inaugurator of a new age in India,—so at least all the Anglo-Indian papers and not a few of the Moderates tell us,—is now before us in all its details. The mountains have again been in labour, and the mouse they have produced this time is enormous in size and worthy of the august mountains that produced him, but not the less ridiculous for all that. What is it that this much trumpeted scheme gives to a people which not inferior in education or intellectual calibre to the Turk, the Persian and the Chinese who already enjoy or in sight of full self-government? There are four elements which have always to be considered in a change of this kind, first, the nature of the electorate, second, the composition of the body itself, thirdly, the freedom of election, fourthly, the scope, functions and powers of the assemblies. There is not one of these points in which the people have really gained, there is hardly one of them in which they are not worse than under the old system.

What change has been made in the electorates? Except that they have been increased in number, we do not see that there has been any real change at all, and an increase in number is of more value in itself, but only if the number of elected members represent a force sufficient to give the people its proper weight in the legislation and administration of the country. We shall show under the third head that we have gained nothing in this direction. On the other hand not only class as was formerly the case, but creed has been made the basis of representation and, therefore, unless the Hindus have the strength of mind to boycott a system which creates a distinction insulting as well as injurious to the community. this measure, while giving us not an atom of self-government, will be a potent engine for dividing the nation into

two hostile interests and barring the way towards the unity of India. Formerly, there were only two classes in India, the superior European and the inferior Indian; now there will be three, the supreme European, the superior Mahomedan and the inferior Hindu. This is loss number one, and it is no small one, to the Mahomedan no less than the Hindu. The official of course gains.

Even if there is no democratic or even semi-democratic basis of election—merely small established bodies which can in no sense be called the people,—something might be gained if the Councils were so composed as to give a preponderance or powerful voice to independent elected representatives. That is what the Councils profess to do and that is why so much parade is made of the non-official majority. What are the facts ? In the Viceroy's Council there are to be thirty-five avowedly Government members, twenty-eight being officials and seven nominated. Of the twenty-five elected members eleven will be sent from the new Councils all over India; as we shall show from the Bengal examples these, Councils will contain a predominant pro-Government vote even among the non-official members and their representatives will be therefore pro-Government men. That makes forty-six reliable votes for the Government. Of the remaining thirteen, two will be Europeans who will naturally side with the Government; that makes forty-nine. Of the remaining eleven, five will be especially elected Mahomedan representatives and, as under the new system the Mahomedans are a favoured class depending for the continuance of the favour on good behaviour, that means another five reliable votes for the Government, which makes fifty-four. Of the remaining six all are representatives of the landholding class who dare not be too independent, although they will no doubt oppose in small matters, which they can do with impunity as there is not the slightest chance of the Government being defeated. The consequence will be that on the Viceroy's Council there is not any reasonable chance of there being a single independent member representing the people. The startling result of the Reforms may not seem at first credible, but if our argument is carefully followed, it will establish itself. No doubt, one or two men like Mr. Gokhale, Sir Feroze Shah Mehta, or Dr. Rashbehari Ghosh will be admitted by permission, but that privilege we had on better terms under the old system.

Let us pass to the Bengal Councils aad establish our position.

In East Bengal, there will be twenty-two nominated and two specially nominated against eighteen elected members establishing at once a standing Government majority of six. Of the eighteen who might oppose, there will be four members who in the nature of things are bound to be Europeans and four especially elected Mahomedan members, which at once raises the reliable Government vote to thirty-two; five representatives of District and Local votes, who, from the preponderance of Mahomedans on those bodies, are bound to be Mahomedans, two representatives of landholders of whom one at least is likely to be a Mahomedan and the other being a landholder, cannot afford to be too independent. There remains three members of Municipal bodies who are all likely to be independent, if the elections are not interferred with by indirect pressure. Therefore, out of forty-two members only three are likely to be independent members. It is needless to point out that the representative of the non-official members on the Viceroy's Council is sure to be a pro-Government man.

Wa pass on to West Bengal where things ought to be better. Here there are twenty-two nominated against twenty-six elected members, giving at first sight a non-Government majority of four. But we have to subtract from the apparent majority and add to the apparent minority four members from European or predominantingly European constituencies, four Mahomedan members and the member for the University, now practically a department of the Government. That gives a Government vote of thirty-one and a possible opposition vote of seventeen. Of these again five are representatives of the landholders who cannot be independent to any notable extent and of whom only one or two are likely to be independent at all. There are, therefore, only twelve votes of which we can any hope, the representatives of the Boards and Municipalities. Here also the independent section of the community is hopelessly ineffective in numbers. Only four of these will be representatives of Bengal and this is one of the most joyous results of the policy of partition and deportation plus co-operation which is the basis of the new measure. Here again the chances of an independent representative being returned to the Viceroy's Council are small on paper, nil in reality.

When we come to the freedom of the electors in choosing their representatives, we find restrictions so astonishing as at once

to expose the spirit and purpose of these reforms. The Boards and Municipalities which alone represent in faint degree the people are debarred from electing anyone not a member of these bodies. Thus at one blow it is rendered impossible for a popular leader like Sj. Motilal Ghosh, unless the Government choose to nominate him, to be on these amazing Councils. Further, anyone dismissed from Government service, e.g., Sj. Surendranath, sentenced at any time to imprisonment or transportation, e.g. Mr. Tilak, or bound down, e.g. mofussil leaders like Sj. Anath Bandhu Guha or Sj. Hardayal Nag, the leading men of Mymensing and Chandpur respectively, or declared by the authorities to be of undesirable antecedents, e.g. Lala Lajpat Rai, Sj. Aswini Kumar Datta, Sj. Krishna Kumar Mitra and all Nationalists and agitators generally, are *ipso facto* incapable of representing the people under these exquisite reforms.

After all this it may seem a waste of time to go into the question of the scope, functions and powers of the Councils. They may briefly be summed up by saying that the councils have no scope and no powers, and that they have also no functions except to talk, but by no means freely and no longer at large. We certainly do not object to the rule that no member shall talk for more than fifteen minutes at a stretch; our only regret is that the maximum could not be fifteen seconds. But since to talk inconclusively and ask questions which need not be answered unless the Government likes, is the only activity allowed to the august councilars, it seems like adding injury to insult to hedge in this windy privilege with so many restrictions. The restrictions placed on the putting of interpellations would rule out of order half the questions in the House of Commons. It is curious how carefully the Government has guarded itself against anything which might inconvenience it or put it into a corner. Even to ask any question about the conduct or character of person except in their official of public capacity, is banned, so that, for instance, if an official misconducts himself in a flagrant manner, so long as he can say that he has done it in his private capacity, the Government cannot be questioned as to the truth of the matter or its intentions with regard to the peccant individual. With a little legal ingenuity we think there is hardly any question, not of the baldest and most insignificant character, which could not be brought under the restricting clauses.

And, to crown all the President is given the power of disallowing any question on the ground that it will inconvenience the State, in other words himself and his Government, and he may disallow any supplementary questions without any reason whatever ! Any resolution may be disallowed for a similar reason or absence of reason. When we add that Native States are held sacrosanct from discussion, the Military similarly safeguarded, and that no value need be attached to the resolutions of the Councils on the Financial Statement and no resolutions at all can be proposed or passed on the Budget, we think we had said all that is necessary to paint in its true colours the glorious liberality of this most wonderful and unheard of reform. We heartily congratulate Lord Morley, Lord Minto and their advisers on the skill with which the whole thing has been framed, the Moderates on the glorious price for which one or two of their leaders have sold the popular cause, the Hindus on their humiliation and the country generally on the disillusionment, we hope the final disillusionment which these Councils, when they meet, will bring about far more successfully than could have been done by any Nationalist propaganda.

**The Nadiya President's Speech**

We congratulate Mr. Aswani Banerjee on the able and vigorous speech delivered by him as the President of the Nadiya Conference. He took up an attitude which was at once mainly and free from excess or violence. For ourselves the first point we turned to was the pronouncement on the Reforms. We do not think the judgment of the country on this ill-conceived measure could have been put with greater truth and force than in the periods of good humoured contempt and irony, scathing yet in perfectly good taste, in which Mr. Banerji disposed of the claims of the Reform Scheme to be a measure of popular self-government. If all public men take the same attitude, the day of a true measure of popular control will be much nearer than if we affect a qualified satisfaction with the political bauble. As Mr. Banerji forcibly pointed out, it does not provide for a popular electorate, it does not admit of the election of popular leaders, it does not create a non-Government majority, or, as we would add, even the reasonable possibility of a strong opposition on essential points. What has the country to do with a reform Council stripped of

these essentials ? The Jo-hookums, the self-seekers, the nonentities who wish to take advantage of the exclusion of distinguished leading men in order to enjoy at the expense of the country's interests, the kudos and substantial advantages of a seat on the Councils will scramble for the newly created heaven; that is the kind of co-operation which the Government will get from the non-Mussulman part of the nation under the scheme, The country remains sullen and dissatisfied.

**The Lieutenant-Governor's Mercy**

The outcry of the Moderates against the exclusion of their best men has led to certain concessions by which apparently the Government hope to minimise or obviate the formidable opposition that is slowly gathering head against the new Councils. These concessions removed not a single obectionable principle from the Bill. They are evidently designed to facilitate the admission into the Council of the two men in Bengal whose opposition may prove most harmful to the chances of the exceedingly skilful Chinese puzzle called the Councils Regulations by which the consummate tacticians of Simla hope to preserve full control for the authorities while earning the credit of a liberal and popular reform. The modification by which men who have served three years on a Municipality become eligible even if they are no longer on any such body at the time of election, seems specially designed to admit Sj. Bhupendranath Bose who, with all the other well known men of Bengal, was excluded by the careful provisions of the Scheme. But to have placated S. Bhupendranath and at the same time disqualified the greater Moderate leader would obviously have been an infructuous concession. Accordingly, we are now given to understand that Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to intimate to the most powerful man in Bengal that, if he stands for election, the disqualification under which he has been placed, will be waived as a special concessions in his favour! We do not know what were the feelings of Sj. Surendranath when he was informed that this back-door had been open to him by the indulgence of the bureaucracy to its dismissed servant. But to us the permission seems to be more humiliating and injurious than the original exclusion,—to Bengal, if not to Surendranath personally. As things stand, he cannot make use of the concession without forfeiting his already much imperiled popularity and putting himself

uselessly into a ridiculous and undignified position. If he stood now, the whole country would believe that his dissatisfaction with the Reforms was due to his personal exclusion and not to the vicious principles of the Scheme. He would enter not in his own right, but by the grace and mercy of the bureaucracy of whom he has been lifelong opponent. And to what end! To stand isolated or with a handful of ineffective votes against a solid phalanx of officials, Government nominees, Europeans, Mahomedans and lukewarm waverers or reactionaries. Sj Surendranath gains nothing for himself or the country by entering the Councils of these shameful terms; he gains everything by holding aloof and standing out for better conditions.

**Chowringhee Humour**

The *Statesman* as a friend was intolerable; as a humorist it is hardly less difficult to bear. There was an elephantine attempt at sardonic humour in a recent article in which it weightily urged the educated community to overlook defects and take full and generous advantages of the great opportunity from the benefits of which they have been excluded. That is the peculiar humour of these reforms. They are Barmecide's feast, gorgeous dishes and silver covers with only unsubstantial air inside, and even from that chameleon's feast the educated classes are carefully excluded, except in a pitifully infinitesimal degree. Yet the Anglo-Indian papers are indignantly remonstrating with the educated classes for not crowding to the table where there are no seats for them and feasting themselves fat on the dainty invisible meats which others are so eagar to partake of. It may be asked why others so anxious for these aerial privileges. Well, that is because it is only the educated classes who are really hungry for substantial political food, the others are eager to see and handle the gorgeous dishes and the silver covers, to say nothing of the kudos of having dined at so rich a house and its material advantages of the individual. But the educated Hindus have had a surfeit of a spacious outsides and are learning to merge the interest of the individual in the good of the nation.

**The Last Resort**

The resort to boycott is becoming instinctive in men's blood; not only in India but everywhere, men confronted by opposition

of a nature which renders it impossible to deal with it effectively, take to boycott with an admirable spontaneity. The rapid spread of this ancient Indian device since China and India applied it for the first time on the gigantic Asiatic scale, is a sign of the times. We can naturally understand the feeling of discomfort which leads the Anglo-Indian papers to deprecate this move on the part of the Moderates. It is true that the reported agreement to boycott the Councils has been denied by representatives of Moderate opinion, but, whether a formal resolution to the affect was recorded or not at the momentous meeting in the Indian Association's rooms, it is this policy which the Moderates are following, for the excellent reason that there is no other. As they pathetically complain, it is not they who have boycotted the Government but the Government which has boycotted them. That is not, of course, literally true. Sj. Ambikacharan Majumdar who has refused to stand as a candidate, is eligible under the Government rules; the disabilities in the way of Sj. Bhupendranath and Surendranath have been waived or removed. But this the Government has taken care to ensure, that if they enter, and evidently the Government desires that they should enter, it shall be as grandiose nonentity, stripped of all powerful backing, individual voices and nothing more. Co-operation on such conditions would be the end of the Moderate party in Bengal and the absolute destruction of the Moderates is an event, which, we confess, we could not contemplate with equanimity. We need a party which will form a convenient channel through which the Government can glide gradually down the path of concession until events have educated our bureaucracy to the point of recognising the necessity of negotiation with the Nationalists. We are therefore glad that the Government has made it imperative on the Moderates to answer boycott with boycott. We have expressed our admiration of the skill with the Reform Regulations have been framed, but it is the skill of the keen eyed but limited tacitician cleverly manipulating forces for a small immediate gain, not of the far-seeing political stratagist. On the contrary, the framers have flung away supports which they ought to have secured and secured others which are either weak or unreliable. The nonentities who are scrambling for a seat in the Council cannot hold the fort for them; the support of the landholders is lacking in sincerity and they are, besides, a force the bureaucracy themselves have stripped ruthlessly of their ancient

strength and leadership, which cannot now be recovered by a seat on the Councils the Mussulmans have suddenly been raised by the amazingly short-sighted policy of Lord Morley into an eager, ambitious and pushing political force which will demand a higher and ever higher price for its support. On the other hand the Moderates have been humiliated in the sight of all India and made a general laughing stock, and the entire Hindu community, always the mightiest in potentiality in the land and now growing conscious of its might, has been put far on the way to become a permanent and embittered opposition. O wonders of Anglo-Indian statesmanship!

**A Salutary Rejection**

We draw the attention of all weak-kneed Nationalists to the ban placed by the Bombay Government on the candidature of the distinguished and able Poona Nationalist, Mr. N.C. Kelkar. Mahratta Nationalism has never been so robustly uncompromising as the Bengal school in its refusal of co-operation in the absence of control, and Mr. Kelkar, though a sincere and ardent Nationalist, a friend and constant fellow worker of Mr. Tilak, has always preserved an independent line in this matter and considered himself at liberty to help the cause of the country on bodies controlled by the Government. It greatly helps our cause that the Government should so emphatically set its face against any mistaken diplomacy of this kind. Mr. Kelkar's only specific offence against eligibility was sentence of fine and two months imprisonment for contempt of court, and that is short of the time required for ineligibility. Sj. Surendranath who, was, by the way sentenced to six months for a still graver contempt, has been specially exempted, unasked, by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal from another disability. It is obvious therefore that Mr. Kelkar's real offence was his Nationalist views and his friendship with Mr. Tilak. We hope that all compromising Nationalists will take the lesson of this rebuff to heart. The object of the Government is to rally the Mahomedans and the Moderates and isolate the Nationalists. No doubt they mean by the Moderates the Loyalist section of that party, but they are evidently wishful not to entirely alienate the Nationalist Moderates, if they can do so while excluding them from all real weight on the Councils. But by what reasoning any Nationalist can imagine that he will escape the operation of the

excluding clauses, we are at a loss to understand. We may also ask our Mahratta brothers what advantage they have gained by being less rigid than ourselves. They are, if anything, more rigorously persecuted than we are in Bengal. Weakness of any kind does not pay in dealing with the Britain.

**Council Elections**

The elections for the Reform Councils, so far as they have proceeded, entirely justify the description of the new bodies which, we gave in our article on the Reforms. The elections for the United Provinces give a fair sample of the results which are sure to obtain all over India. With the exception of two or three gentlemen of the type of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, there is none in the Council to represent the educated wealthy, much less the people at large; all the rest are Europeans, Mahomedans and grandees. It is a Council of Notables, not a reform Legislative Council representing both the Government and the people. In Bengal, two gentlemen have been elected who represent the most lukewarm element in the popular party, for Sj. Baikuntanath Sen and Mr. K.B. Dutt stand not for the new movement in Bengal so much as for the old antiquated Congress politics which Bengal, even in its Moderate element, has left far behind. Behar sends one independent man in Mr. Deepnarayan Singh. All the rest are of the dignified classes who either have no patriotic feelings or dare not express them. It is possible that Sir Edward Baker, in order to remove the stigma of unrepresentative subserviency from his Council, may try to nominate two or three who will help to keep Sj. Baikunthanath and his friend in countenance, but that purely personal grace will not mend matters. The Bengal Council is likely to be an even more select and unrepresentative body than we expected. We counted the Districts Boards as possible constituencies for representatives of opposition and independent opinion, but, for the most part, they might almost as well have been preserves for the aristrocracy. In East Bengal it is evident that the Councils will be a Mahomedan and European body.

**The Alleged Breach of Faith**

The Moderate critics are never tired of harping on the difference between Lord Morley's scheme and the Regulations and alleging or hinting that promises have been made to the ear which

have been broken in the act. *The Statesman* very naturally resents the implied charge of breach of faith. We do not know what private hopes the Secretary of a State may have held out to Mr. Gokhale or Sj. Surendranath Banerjee, but, judging from Lord Morley's public utterances, we do not think the charge of a breach of faith can be for a moment sustained. He has never pretended that his reform was the granting of a democratic constitution or the first step towards Parliamentary self-government, on the contrary he distinctly stated that if he had thought his measure to be anything of the kind he would have immediately withdrawn it. All that he promised was a scheme by which Indian public opinion could be more liberally consulted, and there were from the beginning distinct indications that the Government would put its own meaning on the face and draw a distinction between Indian opinion and Indian educated opinion. If the Moderates chose to interpret this limited concession as the granting of a constitution and a new Magna Charta, neither Lord Morley nor Lord Minto are to blame for a deliberate and gratuitous self-deception and deception of the people. The complaint that the non-official majority is ineffective and unreal, means simple that it is not a popular majority. We do not think the Government ever promised a popular majority; they promised a non-official majority and they have given it. If the Moderates chose to believe that the Government would go out of its way to make the non-official majority a popular one, they have themselves to thank for this pitiful self-delusion, against which the Nationalists have been warning the country for sometime past. The truth is that they have been utterly worsted in their diplomatic relations with British Liberalism and they are now trying to exculpate themselves before the public by throwing the blame on their allies. No English statesman can be condemned for trying to get the best of a diplomatic bargain of this kind; the loser must blame his own folly, not the good faith of the other party. Did not the Bengal Moderates recently propose a similar bargain to the Nationalists in the United Congress Committe's negotiations ? And, if the Nationalists had been fools enough to agree, would they have been justified afterwards in quarreling with the good faith of the Moderates merely because they themselves had chosen to enter the Convention on conditions which would have meant hopeless ineffectiveness in that body and political suicide outside ? If infants in diplomacy choose to cherish

an obstinate admiration for their own Machiavellian cleverness or mere bookmen who do not understand the A.B.C. of practical politics, elect to play the game with past masters of political statecraft, the result is a foregone conclusion. We have exposed over and over again the hollowness of the pretensions of this measure to figure as a great step forward in Indian administration or the beginning of a new progressive era in Indian politics, but we do not need the publication of the Regulations to open our eyes to this hollowness. Lord Morley's statements, the nature of things and of humanity and the clauses of the Reform Bill itself were sufficient guide to any one with even an elementary knowledge of politics.

**Sir Edward Baker's Admissions**

Of all the present rulers of India Sir Edward Baker is the only one who really puts any value on public opinion. He has committed indiscretions of a starting character, he has loyally carried out a policy with which he can have no heartfelt sympathy, but his anxiety to conciliate public opinion even under these adverse circumstances betrays the uneasiness of a man who knows the force of that power even in a subject country and feels that the ruling class are not going the best way to carry that opinion with them. While all the other Provincial Governors have confined there inaugural speeches to the most empty platitudes, he alone has sought to speak as a man who feels the difficulties of a perplexing situation. But we do not think he has helped the Government by his speech. It is in fact a series of damaging admissions. He admits that the exclusion of the Calcutta men by the restrictions attending Municipal election is deliberate, and he cannot be ignorant that this means the exclusion of the leading brains as the most influential personalities in the country. He admits that the Government have taken care of to preclude the chance of being face to face with a numerically strong and robust opposition in the Council. If so, the Councils are not a mirror of the political forces in the country, not a free popular assembly, but a carefully limited council of notables friendly to the existing state of things. Whether the Government are to blame or not for guarding their interests by this manipulation of electorates, is quite another question. All he says is that they have so guarded themselves and, as a result, these Councils may be the kind of advisory body a Government want, they are not the popular

assemblies, mirrors of public opinion and instruments of rapid political development, which the people want. Sir Edward Baker says that no Government can be expected to run the risk of putting itself into a permanent minority,—such a state of things cannot be allowed for a day. We quite agree. That is what we have been telling the people for a long time. Unfortunately, very different hopes and expectations were raised in the minds of Moderate politicians and communicated by them to the people at large. If the eulogies of the Reforms Scheme and the benevolent intentions of Government had been couched in less glowing language, with less of misleading fervour, the present disappointment, irritation and revolt would have been avoided. It is much the best thing for a Government circumstanced like ours to be quite frank and say from the beginning "This much we mean to give; further you must not expect us to go."

**Calcutta and Mofussil**

The point which Sir Edward Baker, in common with all Anglo-Indian publicists, makes of the distinction between Calcutta and the Mofussil, is quite justifiable if the Councils are to be only a superior edition of the local Municipalities out of all relation with the political actualities of the country. If is an indisputable fact that a great deal of the best in the life of Bengal gravitates towards the capital and the partition of Bengal has made no difference in this powerful tendency. Calcutta is to Bengal what Paris is to France. It is from Calcutta the Bengal takes its opinions, its inspirations, its leaders, its tone, its programme of action. One very important reason of this almost inalienable leadership is the greater independence which mean enjoy in Calcutta, another is the higher organisation of life, resources, activity in this great centre of humanity. So long as these causes exist, the supremacy of Calcutta will remain. The object of the electoral rules is to destroy the supremacy of the Calcutta men, whose independence and freedom of the speech and action are distasteful to the instincts of the dominant bureaucrat. The attempt to decentralise the political life of Bengal is not new. In the earlier days of the new movement the Nationalist leaders made strenuous appeals to liberate themselves from Calcutta domination and become equal partners in a better organised provincial activity. They thought it possible then because, in the

first surge of the movement, the Mofussil centres in East Bengal had developed a young political vitality and independence far in excess of the old vitality and independence of Calcutta. But even in these favourable circumstances it was found that, though the districts far outran the capital in the swiftness and thoroughness of their activity, they always waited for an intellectual initiative and sanction from the leaders in Calcutta. Barisal under Sj. Aswini Kumar Dutt was the exception. What the people themselves could not accomplish under the most favourable circumstances, the Government is not likely to effect merely by excluding the Calcutta leaders from the Council. The very conditions of the problem forbid it. They can only disturb the present equilibrium by making political life in the Mofussil as free and well organised as the life of Calcutta. By their own action they have destroyed such freedom and organisation as had been created. Nor can they make their Councils the instrument of so vital a change unless they also make them the centre of political life of Bengal. This they can only do by a large literate electorate, free elections and effectiveness of the popular vote. But, at present, that is not what the bureaucrats desire. They do not desire a free and vigorous political life evenly distributed throughout the country,—that is the Nationalist ideal. They desire to foster a faint political life confined to the dignified and subservient elements in the country while killing the independent popular life, which finds its centre in this city, by an official boycott. They forget that artificial means are helpless against natural process.

**The Non-Official Majority**

Sir Edward complains strongly of the attribution of motives to the Government in the matter of the non-official majority. He argued in effect that the non-official majority cannot be described as unreal or a sham merely because the electorates are so arranged as to return a majority of men favourable to Government. The majority is a non-official majority, but it is not a popular majority. Sir Edward answers that it was never intended to be a popular majority. It was meant only to represent the "honset" public opinion which is capable in most things of seeing eye to eye with the Government; all the rest of public opinion is not honest and therefore unfit for representation. A most delightful

specimen of bureaucratic logic ? The plain question rising above all sophisms is this, is the Government aware or is it not that the great body of educated opinion in India demand a change in the system of Government involving popular control in the administration, a change which Lord Morley, with all Anglo-Indian to echo him, has declared impossible ? If the Government doubts it, dare they take a plebiscite of literate opinion on the question ? They dare not, because they know what the result will be. Is not this knowledge the reason for so manipulating the electorates that they shall mainly represent a special interest easily influenced by the Government and not the mass of the literate population ? We do not charge the Government with a breach of faith or a departure from their original promises. We do say that the Reforms are purely a diplomatic move to strengthen the Government and weaken the popular interest. Sir Edward stigmatises the popular sentiment which sees an opposition of interest all along the line between the bureaucracy and the people, as dishonest and unfit for self-Government. What of the very fundamental opposition of interest, we have pointed out ? It is easy to fling epithets; it is not so easy to disprove facts ? We do not wish to be unfair to anyone and we acknowledge that Sir Edward Baker has shown a liberality of purpose far superior to that of any other provincial ruler. If there were a chance of any of the Councils being a genuine popular assembly, Sir Edward's creation would have the best chance. But it is not that and cannot be. If he is satisfied with its present composition, his admiration is not shared by the people of this country. He says in effect that it is quite as dignified as any previous Council. We agree, even more so. But it is not dignity to which pupular sentiment is advancing, it is democracy. If the Councils do not provide a channel for the advance of that sentiment, it will seek other means of self-accomplishment.

## INDIAN NATIONALISM : THE EMERGENCE OF TERRORISM

**Sir Louis Dane on Terrorism**

The amazing lecture given by the Satrap of the Punjab to the Maharaja of Darbhanga and the other gentlemen who were ill-advised enough to approach him with their expressions of

loyalty and of abhorrence at the Nasik murder, is a sample of the kind of thing Moderate politicians may expect when they approach the bureaucracy with their "co-operation." What it is precisely that the various Satraps want of their long-suffering allies, we cannot conjecture. Some seem to want, like Sir George Clarke, the entire cessation of political agitation, because the political agitator is the spiritual grand-uncle of the political assassin. Others seem to want the entire Indian community to leave their ordinary avocations and turn detectives, in order to supply the deficiencies of that costly police through which the bureaucracy governs the country. But Sir Louis Dane's diatribe seems difficult to account for except on the supposition that he is a disciple of Hare Street and believes that the whole population of India, from the Maharaja of Darbhanga to the grocer and the shoe-maker, know the personality, intentions, plans and secret operations of the Terrorists and conceal them from Government out of innate cussedness or invincible sympathy with the assasins. It is difficult to have patience with the insensate folly which persists in these delusions and, by lumping all political agitation into one category, does its best to bring about the calamity which it imagines. The fewer rulers like Sir Louis there are in this country, the better for the nation and the Government; for they are the best allies that Terrorism has.

**The Banerji Vigilance Committees**

The novel departure initiated by the fertile mind of Srijut Surendranath Banerji at Barrackpur in the creation of Vigilance Committees to check the nocturnal lovers of bomb and bullet practice on the E.B.S.R. has created great interest and amusement among his countrymen. There are many who are ungenerous enough to attribute this anti-Anarchical zeal less to loyalty and a noble "Co-operative" instinct than to the fact that our great leader has himself to travel daily over the zone of danger. Even if it were so, the sneer is ungenerous. We all love our lives, we have all to travel occasionally by the E.B.S.R. in first or second class and we cannot ignore the fact that random bullets and explosive cocoanuts are no respecters of persons and, if they find the head even of a Nationalist leader in the way, will not be polite enough to walk round it. We shall all therefore be grateful to our old man eloquent, if he can ensure our common safety. But

for ourselves we do not see how he can effect his laudable object. It would be possible for Srijut Surendranath and the other estimable burgesses of Barrackpur to patrol the railway at night. but the weather is still cold, sleep is pleasant, bullets and cocoanuts perilous missiles, and, if anything happens, the police are quite capable of suspecting and arresting the too vigilant patrons of the public peace. One might revive the 'National Volunteers'' for the purpose; but the Samities are disbanded, students forbidden to take part in politics or do anything that would interfere with their studies. They are not likely to be enthusiastic for this kind of volunteer work under these conditions. And, if such organisations were created, it would be more likely to alarm than gratify a suspicious and nervous Government which might see in it a disingenuous device for reviving the proclaimed Samities. The only other resource is for these novel vigilance men to turn detective, the Terrorists and give information to the police which they can only do by becoming agent provocators and so warming themselves into the confidence of their quarry. That is a kind of dirty work no Indian gentleman is likely to undertake even with the prospect of vindicating his loyalty, escaping house-searches and deportation and earning the encomiums of the *Englishman*.

**The High Court Assassination**

The startling assasination of Deputy Superintendent Shamsul-Alam on Monday in the precincts of the High Court, publicly, in day-light, under the eyes of many and in a crowded building, breaks the silence which had settled on the country, in a fashion which all will deplore. The deceased officer was perhaps the ablest, most energetic and most zealous member of the Bengal Detective Force. It was his misfortune that he took the leading part not only in the Alipore Bomb Case in which he zealously and untiringly assisted the crown solicitors, but in the investigation of the Haludbari and Netra dacoities. The nature of his duties exposed him to the resentment of the small Terrorist bodies whose continued existence in Bengal is proved by this last daring and reckless crime. Under such circumstances a man carries his life in his hand and it seems only a matter of time when it will be struck from him. We have no doubt that the Government will suitably recognise his services by a handsome provision for his family. As for crime itself, it is one of the boldest of the many

bold acts of violence for which the Terrorists have been responsible. We wish we could agree with some of our contemporaries that the perpetrators of these deplorable outrages are dastards and cowards; for if it were so, Terrorism would be a thing to be abhorred, but not feared. On the contrary, the Indian Terrorist seems to be usually a man fanatical in his determination and daring, to perfer public places and crowded buildings for his field and to scorn secrecy and a fair chance of escape. It is this remarkable feature which has distinguished alike the crimes at Nasik, London, Calcutta, to say nothing of the assassination of Gossain in jail. With such men it is difficult to deal. Neither fear nor reasoning, disapprobation nor isolation can have any effect on them. Nor will the Government of this country allow us to use what we believe to be the only effective measure of combating the spread of the virus among the people. All we can do is to sit with folded hands and listen to the senseless objurgations of the Anglo-Indian Press, waiting for a time when the peaceful expression and organisation of our national aspirations will no longer be penalised. It is then that Terrorism mill vanish from the country and the nightmare be as if it never had been.

**Anglo-Indian Prescriptions**

The Anglo-Indian papers publish those usual senseless prescriptions for the cure of the evil. The *Englishman* informs us that it is at last tired of these outrages and ask in a tone full of genuine weariness when the Government will take the steps which Hare Street has always been advising. It seems to us that the Government have gone fairly far in that direction. The only remaining steps are to silence the Press entirely, abolish the necessity of investigation and trial and deport every public man of India. And when by removing everything and everyone that still encourages the people to persevere in peaceful political agitation, Russia has been reproduced in India and all is hushed except the noise of the endless duel between the omnipotent policemen and the secret assassin, the *Englishman* will be satisfied,—but the country will not be at peace. *The Indian Daily News* more sensibly suggests police activity in detecting secret organisations,—although its remarks would have sounded better without an implied prejudgement of the Nasik case. If the police were to employ the

sound detective methods employed in England and France, it would take them a little longer to effect a coup, but there would be some chance of real success. It is not by indiscriminate arrests, harassing house-searches undertaken on the word of informers paid so much for each piece of information true or false, and interminable detention of undertrial prisoners in jail that these formidable secret societies will be uprooted. Such processes are more likely to swell their numbers and add to their strength. The *Statesman* is particularly worth with the people of this country for their objection to police methods and goes so far as to lay the blame for the murder of Sam-sul-Alam on these objections. If we had only submitted cheerfully to police harassment, all this would not have happened! The bitter ineptitude of our contemporary grows daily more pronounced and takes more and more refuge in ridiculously inconsequent arguments. Is it the objectionable methods or our objections to them that are to blame? We may safely say that, whatever influences may have been at work in the mind of the assassin, the occasional criticisms of vexations house-search in the Bengal journals had nothing to do with his action. *The Statesman* does not scruple, like other Anglo-Indian papers, to question the sincerity of the condemnations of the Terrorist outrage which are now-a-days universal throughout the country, and to support its insinuations it has to go as far back as the Gossain murder and the demonstrations that followed it. These demonstrations were not an approval of Terrorism as a policy, but an outburst of gratitude to the man who removed a dangerous and reckless perjurer whose evil breath was scattering ruin and peril over innocent homes and blameless heads throughout Bengal. We do not praise or justify that outburst,—for murder is murder, whatever its motives,—but it is not fair to give it a complexion other than the one it really wore. If it had really been true that a whole nation approved of Terrorism and supported the assassin by secret or open sympathy, it would be more damning indictment of British statesmanship in India than any seditious pen could frame. The Chowringhee paper's libellous insinuation that the secret societies are not secret and their members are known to the public, has only to be mentioned in order to show the spirit of this gratuitous adviser of the Indian people. Nor one can praise without a smile the suggestion that the Hindu community should use the weapon of social ostracism against the Terrorists. Whom

are we to outcaste, the hanged or transported assassin, or his innocent relatives ?

**The Party of Revolution**

Be the fault whose you will, ours or the Government's, the existence of an organised party of armed Revolution in Indian politics is now a recognised factor of the situation. The enormous strides with which events have advanced and a sky of full of trouble but also of hope been overcast and grown full of gloom and menace, can be measured by the rapidly with which this party has developed. It is only five years since the national movement sprung into being. The cry was then for self-help and passive resistance. Boycott, Swadeshi, Arbitration, National Education, were the hope of the future, the means of self-regeneration. In five years everything has been struck to the earth. Boycott has almost disappeared, Swadeshi anguishes under sentence of arrest, Arbitration died still-born, National Education is committing suicide. A tremendous disintegration has taken place and we look amazed on the ruins of the work our labour, our sacrifice erected. It is a huge defeat, an astonishing catastrophe. And on those ruins grim, wild-eyed, pitiless to itself and and to others mocking at death and defeat with its raucous and careless laughter Revolution rises repeating the language of the old-world insurgents, cherishing a desperate hope which modern conditions deny, grasping at the weapons which the Slav and the Celts have brought into political warfare. The seed which the *Yugantar* sowed in its brief, violent and meteoric career have borne fruit in unexpected quarters and new-born journals repeat in foreign lands and in the English tongue the incitations to revolt and slaughter which have been put down by the strong hand in India of the law. Money is forthcoming to support a journalism which must obviously be all cost and no profit, young men exile themselves from their native land by openly joining the party of violence and in India itself repeated blows have been struck paralysing the hope and effort to revive the activity of that broader and calmer Nationalism which, recognising modern conditions, still commands the allegiance of the bulk of the nation.

**Its Growth**

What is the precise nature, propaganda and strength of this

party, which by so small an expenditure of energy has produced such surprising results ? When the *Yugantar*, abandoning its habit of philosophic Revolutionism first began to enter the field of practical politics, to sneer at passive resistance and grid at its chief exponents, no one thought that its change of attitude pretended anything serious. Men read the paper for the amazing brilliance, grace and sustained force of its style, a new thing in Bengali journalism, and from the natural attraction men feel for strong writing and bold thought even when they do not agree with it. Afterwards the reckless fight of the *Yugantar* for existence attracted a more dangerous admiration and from that time the journal changed from a thing of literary interest into a political force. Even then it was taken as a practical guide only among a section of young men small in numbers and without means or influence. But things have changed since then. A void has been created by the conviction, deportation, self-imposed exile or silence of the great Nationalist speakers, writers, organisers, and the dangerous opinions and activities then created have rushed into occupy the vaccum. The Nationalism we advocate is a thing difficult to grasp and follow, needing continual intellectual exposition to keep its hold on the mind, continual inspiration and encouragement to combat the impatience natural to humanity; its methods are comparatively new in politics and can only justify themselves to human conservatism by distinguished and sustained success. The preaching of the new revolutionary party is familiar to human imgination, supported by the records of some of the most inspiring episodes in history, in consonance with the impatience, violence and passion for concrete results which revolutionary epochs generate. The growing strength of this party is not difficult to explain; it is extremely difficult to combat.

**Its Extent**

This party has two sides, the propaganda carried on in foreign countries, and the Terrorist activity always recrudescent in our midst. The latter is the most formidable in the present, the former the most dangerous in the future. The foreign propaganda was first located in London and confined to the single paper, the *Indian Sociologist*, first an organ of Shyamji Krishnavarma's Home Rule Society and opposed to all methods of violence. The conversion of Krishnavarma to the Terrorism he once fiercely

condemned, has been a very important factor in the growth of the new party. The propaganda has been driven from London only to spring at once into an ubiquitous abroad. From Paris Krishnavarma publishes the *Indian Sociologist*, from Berlin a new organ, significantly self-styled the *Talwar*, issues; in Geneva a paper naming itself the "Bande Mataram" busies itself with decrying the policy of the defunct "Bande Mataram" and denouncing its originator and former Editor; a paper called the *Free Hindustan* maintains itself in America. Wealthy men and women stand behind these organs, the Kathiawar Krishnavarma, the Parsi lady Mrs. Kama and possibly others who do not advertise their names. Young men of all nationalities in India seem to have joined these organisations and occasional pamphlets find their way into India inspite of the vigilance of the Post Office by means familiar to European revolutionism. In India any violent propaganda is possible; violent action takes its place and the swift succession of attempted or successful outrages in Guzerat, Maharashtra, Punjab and Bengal show that if the movement is not organised, as in these foreign countries, it is equally widespread. The very existence of such a conspiracy must paralyse all other forms and methods of national aspiration by driving the Government and the Anglo-Indian community into the suppression of everything that goes beyond contented acceptance of that which exists. The revolutionists know this well and they have played their game with great skill and success.

## INDIAN NATIONALISM : THE FUTURE

### Past and the Future

Our contemporary, the *Statesman*, notices in an unusually self-restrained article the recent brochure republished by Doctor A.K. Coomaraswamy from the *Modern Review* under the title, "The Message of the East". We had not the work before us but, from our memory of the articles and our knowledge of our distinguished countryman's views, we do not think the *Statesman* has quite caught the spirit of the writer. Doctor Coomaraswamy is above all a lover of art and beauty and the ancient thought and greatness of India, but he is also, and as a result of this deep love and appreciation, and ardent Nationalist. Writing as an artist, he calls attention to the debased aesthetic ideas and tastes which the

ugly and sordid commercialism of the West has introduced into the mind of a nation once distinguised for its superior beauty and grandure of conception and for the extent to which it suffused the whole of life with the forces of the intellect and the spirit. He laments the persistence of a servile imitation of English ideas, English methods, English machinery and production even in the new Nationalism. And he reminds his readers that nations cannot be made by politics and economics alone, but that art also has a great and a still unrecognised claim. The main drift of his writing is to ensure the low imitative un-Indian and bourgeois ideals of our national activity in the nineteenth century and to recall our minds to the cardinal fact that, if India is to rise and be great as a nation, it is not by imitating the methods and institutions of English politics and commerce, but carrying her own civilisation, purified of weaknesses that have overtaken it, to a much higher and mightier fulfilment than any that it has reached in the past. Our nation is to outdistance, lead and instruct Europe, not merely to imitate and learn from her. Doctor Coomaraswamy speaks of art, but it is certain that a man of his wide culture would not exclude, and we know he does not exclude, thought, literature, and religion from the forces that must uplift our nation and are necessary to its future. To recover Indian thought, Indian character, Indian perceptions, Indian energy, Indian greatness, and to solve the problems that perplexed the world in an Indian spirit and from the Indian standpoint, this, in our view, with a mission of Nationalism. We agree with Doctor Coomaraswamy that an exclusive preoccupation with politics and economics is likely to dwarf our growth and prevent the flowering of originality and energy. We have to return to the fountainheads of our ancient religion, philosophy, art and literature and pour the revivifying influences of our immemorial Aryan spirit and ideals into our political and economic development. This is the ideal the *Karmayogin* holds before it, and our outlook and Doctor Coomaraswamy's do not substantially differ. But in judging our present activities we cannot look, as he does, from a purely artistic and idealistic standpoint, but must act and write in the spirit of a practical idealism.

The debasement of our mind, character and tastes by a grossly commercial, materialistic and insufficient European education is a fact upon which the young Nationalism has always insisted. The

practical destruction of our artistic perceptions and the plastic skill and fineness of eye and hand which once gave our productions pre-eminence distinction and mastery of the European markets, is also a thing accomplished. Most vital of all the spiritual and intellectual divorce from the past which the present schools and universities have effected, has beggared the nation of the originality, high aspiration and forceful energy which can alone make a nation free and great. To reverse the process and recover what we have lost, is undoubtedly the first object to which we ought to devote ourselves. And as the loss of originality, aspiration and energy was the most vital of all these losses, so their recovery should be our first and most important objective. The primary aim of the prophets of Nationalism was to rid the nation of the idea that the future was limited by the circumstances of the present, that because temporary causes had brought us low and made us weak, low therefore must be our aims and weak our methods. They pointed the mind of the people to a great and splendid destiny, not in some distant millennuim but in the comparatively near future, and fired the hearts of the young men with a burning desire to realise the apocalyptic vision. As a justification of what might otherwise have seemed a dream and as an inexhaustible source of energy and inspiration, they pointed persistantly to the great achievements and grandiose civilisation of our forefathers and called on the rising generation to recover their lost spiritual and intellectual heritage. It cannot be denied that this double effort to realise the past and the future has been the distinguishing temperament and the chief uplifting force in the movement, and it cannot be denied that it is bringing back to our young men originality, aspiration. and energy. By this force the character, temper and action of the Bengali has been altered beyond recognition in a few years. To raise the mind, character and tastes of the people, to recover the ancient nobility of temper, the strong Aryan character and the high Aryan outlook, the perceptions which made earthly life beautiful and wonderful, and the magnificient spiritual experiences, realisations and aspirations which made us the deepest-hearted, deepest-thoughted and most delicately profound in life of all the peoples of the earth, is the task next in importance and urgency. We had hoped by means of National Education to affect this great object as well as to restore to our youth the intellectual heritage of the nation and build up

on that basis a yet greater culture in the future. We must admit that the instrument which we cherished and for which such sacrifices were made, has proved insufficient and threatens, in unfit hands, to lose its promise of fulfilment and be diverted to lower ends. But the movement is greater than its instruments. We must strive to prevent the destruction of that which we have created and in the meanwhile, build up a centre of culture, freer and more perfect, which will either permeate the other with itself or to replace it if destroyed. Finally, the artistic awakening has been commenced by that young, living and energetic school which has gathered round the Master and originator, Sj. Abanindranath Tagore. The impulse which this school is giving, its inspired artistic recovery of the past, its intuitive anticipations of the future, have to be popularised and made a national possession.

Doctor Coomaraswamy complains of the survivals of the past in the preparations for the future but no movement, however vigorous, can throw off in a few years the effects of a whole century. We must remember also why the degradation and denationalisation, "the mighty evil in our souls," of which the writer complains, came into being. A painful but necessary work had to be done, and because the English nation were the fittest instrument for his purpose, God led them all over those thousands of miles of alien Ocean, gave a strength to their hearts and subtlety to their brains, and set them up in India to do His work, which they have been doing faithfully if blindly, ever since and are doing at the present moment. The spirit and ideals of India had come to be confined in a mould which, however beautiful, who too narrow and slender to bear the mightly burden of our future. When that happens, the mould has to be broken and even the ideal lost for a while, in order to be recovered free of constraint and limitation. We have to recover the Aryan spirit and ideal and keep it intact but enshrined in new forms and more expansive institutions. We have to treasure jealously everything in our social structure, manners, institutions, which is of permanent value, essential to our spirit or helpful to the future; but we must not cabin the expanding and aggressive spirit of India in temporary forms which are the creation of the last few hundred years. That would be a vain and disastrous endeavour. The mould is broken; we must remould in larger outlines and with a richer content. For the work of destruction England was best fitted by her stubborn individuality

and by that very commercialism and materialism which made her the anti-type in temper and culture of the race she governed. She was chosen too for the unrivalled efficiency and skill with which she has organised an individualistic and materialistic democracy. We had to come to close quarters with that democratic organisation, draw it into ourselves and absorb the democratic spirit and methods so that we might rise beyond them. Our half-aristocratic, half-theocratic feudalism had to be broken, in order that the democratic spirit of the Vedanta might be released and, by absorbing all that is needed of the aristocratic and theocratic culture, create for the Indian race a new and powerful political and social organisation. We have to learn and use the democratic principle and methods of Europe in order that hereafter we may build up something more suited to our past and to the future of humanity. We have to throw away the individualism and materialism and keep the democracy. We have to solve for the human race the problem of harmonising and spiritualising its impluses towards liberty, equality and fraternity. In order that we may fulfil our mission we must be masters in our own home. It is out of no hostility to the English people, no race hatred that we seek absolute autonomy, but because it is the first condition of our developing our national self and realising our destiny. It is for this reason that the engrossing political pre-occupation came upon us; and we cannot give up or tone down our political movement until the lesson of democratic self-government is learned and the first condition of national self-fulfilment realised. For another reason also England was chosen, because she had organised the competitive system of commerce, with its bitter and murderous struggle for existence, in the most skilful, discrete and successful fashion. We had to feel the full weight of that system and learn the literal meaning of this industrial realisation of Darwinism. It has been written large for us in ghastly letters of famine, chronic starvation and misery and a decreasing population. We have risen at last, entered into the battle and with the Boycott for a weapon, are striking at the throat of the British commerce, even as it struck at others, first by protection and then by free trade. Again, it is not out of hatred that we strive, but out of self-preservation. We must conquer in that battle if we are to live. We cannot arrest our development of industry and commerce while waiting for a new commercial system to develop or for beauty and art to reconquer

the world. As in politics so in commerce, we must learn and master the European methods in order that we may eventually rise above them. The crude commercial Swadeshi, which Doctor Coomaraswamy finds so distasteful and disappointing, is as integral a part of the national awakening as the movement towards Swaraj or as the new School of Art. If this crude Swadeshi were to collapse and the national movement towards autonomy come to nothing, the democratic renascence he has praised so highly, would wither and sink with the drying up of the soil in which it was planted. A nation need not be luxuriously wealthy in order to be profoundly artistic, but it must have a certain amount of well-being, a national culture and, above all, hope and ardour, if it is to maintain a national art based on a wide-spread development of artistic perception and faculty. Moreover, aesthetic arts and crafts cannot live against the onrush of cheap and vulgar manufactures under the conditions of the modern social structure. Industry can only become again beautiful if poverty and the struggle for life are eliminated from society and the co-operative State and commune organised as the fruit of a great moral and spiritual uplifting of humanity. We hold such an uplifting and reorganisation as part of India's mission but to do her work we must live. Therefore, the commercial pre-occupation has been added to the political. We perceive the salvation of the country not in parting with either of these, but in adding to them a religious and moral pre-occupation. On the basis of that religious and moral awakening the pre-occupation of art and fine culture will be added and firmly based. There are many who perceive the necessity of the religious and moral regeneration, who are inclined to turn from the prosaic details of politics and commerce and regret that any guide and teacher of the nation should stoop to mingle them. That is a grievous error. The men who would lead India must be catholic and many sided. When the Avatar comes, we like to believe that he will be not only the religious guide, but the political leader, the great educationist, the regenerator of society, the captain of co-operative industry, with the soul of the poet, scholar and artist. He will be in short the summary and grand type of the future Indian nation which is rising to reshape and lead the world.

**Mahamedan Representation**

The question of separate representation for the Mahamedan

community is one of those momentous issues raised in haste by a statesman unable to appreciate the forces with which he is dealing, which bear fruit no man expected and least of all the ill-advised Frankenstein who was the first responsible for its creation. The common belief among Hindus is that the Government have decided to depress the Hindu element in the Indian people by raising the Mahamedan element, and ensure a perpetual preponderance in their own favour by leaning on a Mahamedan vote purchased by a system of preference. The denials of high class officials, who declared that it is only out of careful consideration for the rights and interests of minorities that they have made a special Mahommedan representation an essential feature of the Reform Scheme, have not convinced a single Hindu mind; for the obvious retort is that it is only one minority which is specially cared for and this special care is extended to it even in provinces where it is in a large majority. No provision at all has been made for the safe-guarding of Hindu minorities for the Parsis, the Sikhs, the Christians and other sections which may reasonably declare that they too are Indians and citizens of the Empire no less than the Mahamedans. The workings of this belief in the mind of the premier community in India cannot at present be gauged. It is not till the details of the Reform Scheme are published, elections over, the councils working and the preponderance of the pro-government vote visible, that those workings can assume a definite shape. At present irritation, heart-burning, a solemn gloom and a growing resolve to assert and organise a separate existence and work for their own hand are the first results of the separatist policy. How far Sir Feroz Shah and his valiant band will be able to fight this growing discontent, remains to be seen. It is quite possible that the pro-Mahamedanism of the Reform Scheme may lead to a Hindu upheaval all over India, as fervent and momentous as the convulsion in Bengal, Madras and Maharashtra which followed Lord Curzon's Partition blunder. How far it will advantage the Mahamedans to be in active opposition to an irritated and revolted Hindu community throughout the country they live in, is a question for Mahamedans to consider. A certain section with Syed Hyder Reza at their head have considered it and are against the separate representation altogether. Another section represented by Mr. Ali Imam are for a compromise between the full Moslem demand for

seperate electorate and the Hindu demand for equal treatment of all communities. Unfortunately, this compromise is merely the Government scheme which Hindu sentiment has almost unanimously condemned as unfair and partial. The only section of Hindus in its favour is the dwindling minority which follows the great twin bretheren of Bombay and the support given by Mr. Gokhale and Sir Feroz Shah to the separate representation idea is likely to cost them their influence with the moderate Hindu community everywhere outside the narrow radius of their personal influence. A third section rejoicing in the leadership of Mr. Amir Ali, are the irreconcilables of militant Islam aspiring to hold India under the British aegis as heirs of the Mogul and keepers of the gateway of India. The Reform Scheme is the second act of insanity which has germinated from the unsound policy of the bureaucracy. It will cast all India into the melting pot and complete the work of the Partition. Our own attitude is clear. We will have no part of lot in Reforms which deal no popular majority, no substantive control, no opportunity for Indian capacity and statesmanship, no seed of democratic expansion. We will not for a moment accept separate electorates or separate representation, not because we are opposed to a large Mahamedan influence in popular assemblies when they come but, because we will be no party to a distinction which recognises Hindu and Mahamedan as permanently separate political units and thus precludes the growth of single and indivisible Indian nation. We oppose any such attempt at division whether it comes from an embarrassed Government seeking for political support or from an embittered Hindu community allowing the passions of the moment to obscure their vision of the future.

**"Swaraj" and the Musulmans**

We extract in our columns this week the comments of Sj. Bepin Chandra Pal's organ, "Swaraj," on the Government's Pro-Mahamedan policy and its possible effects in the future. We are glad to see this great Nationalism again expressing his views with his usual originality and fine political insight. We do not ourselves understand the utility of such a campaign as Sj. Bepin Chandra is carrying on in England. It politics quite as much as in ordinary conduct the rule of *des-kal-patra*, the right place, the right time and the right person, conditions the value and the

collectiveness of the work. For Bepin Babu's mission there could not be a worse place than England a worse time than the present and a worse audience than the British people. What is the prophet of self-help and dissociation doing in England ! Or what kind of message is this that he carries to the British public, "We do not welcome your favours, we reject your help and sympathy and will have no political association with you until Swaraj is ours,—and therefore I am here speaking to you and publishing my views to a British audience in London !" We can only suppose that Bepin Babu does really imagine he can produce some kind of effect worth having, moral if not substantial, upon the ruling nation, and if so what does it portend ? Is Saul also among the prophets ? Does Bepin too stand in the doorway of Britania ?

The first three or four issues of *Swaraj* disappointed our expectations. A sense of the unreality of his position seemed to haunt the writer and robbed his writing of the former strength and close touch with the subject. It was the old views, the familiar thought, the well known manner, but it neither convinced, illuminated nor inspired. This month's *Swaraj* is more confident and effective although the thing still seems to be in the air. The passage extracted and the admirable character sketch of Sj. Shyamsundar Chakravarty are the best things in the issue. Bepin Babu seems to have recovered the copious vein of thought, the subtle and flexible reasoning, the just and original view of his subject which made one wait with impatience for every fresh number of *New India.* His attitude towards the Reform Scheme and the Mahamedan demand for a separate electorate is the attitude which has consistantly been adopted by the Nationalist party in Bengal towards the Hindu-Mahamedan question in ordinary politics. We do not fear Mahamedan opposition; as long as it is the honest Swadeshi article and not manufactured in Shillong or Simla, we welcome it as a sign of life and aspirtaion. We do not shun, we desire the awakening of Islam in India even if its first crude efforts are misdirected against ourselves; for all strength, all energy, all action is grist to the mill of the nation-builder. In that faith we are ready, when the time comes for us to meet in the political field to exchange with the Musulman, just as he chooses, the firm clasp of the brother or the resolute grip of the wrestler.

That time has not yet come, There is absolutely no reason why the electoral question should create bad blood between the two communities, for if we live aside the limited number who still hunger after loaves and fishes or nurse dead delusions, the reform has no living interest for the Hindu. His field of energy lies elsewhere than in the enlarged pretences of British Liberalism. His business is to find out his own strength and prepare it for a great future, and the less he meddles with unreal politics and nerveless activities, the better for the nation. The Mahamedan has not progressed so far. He has to taste the sweets of political privilege and find them turn to ashes in its mouth. He has to formulate demands rejoice at promises, fume at betrayals, until he thoroughly discovers the falsity and impossibility of his hopes. His progress is likely to be much swifter than ours has been in the past, for he gets the advantage if not of our experience, at least of the ideas now in the air and of the more bracing and stimulating atmosphere. He is more likely to demand than to crave, and his disillusionment must necessarily be the speedier. It is then that and he too will seek the strength in himself and touch the true springs of self-development. Our best policy is to leave the Mahamedan representatives on the council to work out their destiny face to face with the bureaucracy, with no weightier Hindu counterpoise than the effete politicians, the time servers and the self-seekers.

Of one thing we may be certain, that Hindu-Mahamedan unity cannot be effected by political adjustment or Congress flatteries. It must be sought deeper down, in the heart and in the mind for where the causes of disunion are, there the remedies must be sought. We shall do well in trying to solve the problem to remember that misunderstanding is the most fruitful cause of our differances, that love compels love and that strength conciliates the strong. We must strive to remove the causes of misunderstanding by a better mutual knowledge and sympathy; we must extend the unfaltering love of the patriot to our Musulman brother remembering always that in him too *Narayan* dwells and to him too our Mother has given a permanent place in her bosom; but we must cease to approach him falsely or flatter out of a selfish weakness and cowardice. We believe this to be the only practical way of dealing with the difficulty. As a political question the Hindu-Mahamedan problem does not interest us at

all, as a national problem it is of supreme importance. We shall make it a main part of our work to place Mahamed and Islam in a new light before our readers, to spread juster views of Mahamedan history and civilisation, to appreciate the Musulman's place in our national development and the means of harmonising his communal life with our own, not ignoring the difficulties that stand in our way for making the most of the possibilities of brotherhood and mutual understanding. Intellectual sympathy can only draw together, the sympathy of the heart can alone unite. But the one is a good preparation for the other.

**The Hindu Sabha**

An indication of the immense changes which are coming over our country, is the sudden leaping into being of new movements and organisations which are, by their very existence, evidence of revolutions in public feeling and omens of the future. The dead bones live indeed and the long sleep of the ages is broken. The Moslem League was indicative of much, the Hindu Sabha is indicative of yet more. The Nationalist party, while in entire disagreement with the immediate objects and spirit of the league, welcome its birth as a sign of renovated political life in the Mahomedan community. But the Mahomedan community was always coherent, united and separately self-conscious. The strength of Islam lay in its unity and cohesion, the fruit of long discipline in equality and brotherhood, the strength of the Hindu in flexibility, progressiveness, elasticity, a divination of necessary changes, broad ideas, growing aspirations, the fruit of a long discipline in intellectual and moral sensitiveness. The Moslem League meant that the Mahomedan was awaking to the need of change, the growth of aspiration in the world around him,—not yet to the broad idea modern life demanded. The Hindu Sabha means that the Hindu is awakening to the need of unity and cohesion.

Does it mean more ? Does it indicate a larger statesmanship, quicker impulse to action, a greater capacity for the unity and cohesion seeks ? Is the Hindu Sabha a novel body, with the power in it to effect great objects never before accomplished, the effective union of all shades of Hindu opinion from the lax Anglicised Agnostic, Hindu in nothing but birth and blood, to the intense and narrow worshipper of the institutes of Raghunandan ?

Or is it merely an ineffectual aspiration, like the old Congress, capable of creating a general sympathy and oneness of aim, but not of practical purpose and effective organisation ? There are only two things strong enough to units Hinduism, a new spiritual impulse based on Vedanta, the essential oneness of man, the transience and utilitarian character of institutions, the lofty ideals of brotherhood, freedom, equality, and recognition of the great mission and mighty future of the Hindus' spiritual ideas and discipline and of the Indian race,—or else a political impulse strong enough to unite Hindus together for the preservation and advancement of their community. The Hindu Sabha could not have come into being but for the great national movement which awakened the national spirit, the sense of past greatness, the divination of a mighty future; transforming the whole spirit and character of the educated community. But we fear that in its immediate inception and work it leans for its hope of success on a lower and less powerful motive—rivalry with Mahomedan pretensions and a desire to put the mass and force of an united Hinduism against the intensity of a Mahomedan self-assertion supported by official patronage and Anglo-Indian favour. Alarm and resentment at the pro-Mahomedan policy underlying the Reform Scheme and dissatisfaction with the Bombay conventionists for their suicidal support of the Government policy entered largely into the universal support given by Punjab Hindus to the newly body and its great initial success. Mortification at the success of Mahomedan in securing Anglo-Indian sympathy and favour and the exclusion in Hindu from those blissful privileges figured largely in the speech of Sir Pratul Chandra Chatterjee who was held as the natural leader of Punjab Hinduism. These are not good omens. It is not by rivalry for Anglo-Indian favour, it is not by quarrelling for the loaves and fishes of British administration that Hinduism can rise into an united and effective force. If the Hindu Sabha takes its anchor on these petty aspirations or, if it founds any part of its strength on political emulation with the Mahomedans, it will be impossible for the Nationalist party to join in a movement which would otherwise have their full sympathy and eager support.

Lala Lajpat Rai struck a higher note, that of Hindu nationalism as a necessary preliminary to a greater Indian Nationality. We distrust this ideal. Not that we are blind to facts—not that

nationality. The failure of the British rule to root itself lies in its inability to become one with the nation either by the effacement of our national individuality or by the renunciation or its own separate pride and self-interest. These things are therefore necessary to Indian nationality, geographical separateness, geographical compactness and a living national spirit. The first was always ours and made India a people apart from the earliest times. The second we have attained by British rule. The third has just sprung into existence.

But the country, the Swadesh which must be the base and funds, mental of our nationality, is India, a country where Mahomedan and Hindu live intermingled and side by side. What geographical base can a Hindu nationality possess ? Maharashtra and Rajasthan are no longer separate geographical units but merely provincial divisions of a single country. The very first requisite of a Hindu nationalism is wanting. The Mahomedans base their separateness and their refusal to regard themselves as Indian first and Mahomedans afterwards on the existence of great Mahomedans nations to which they feel themselves more akin, in spite of our common birth and blood, than to us. Hindus have no such resource. For good or evil, they are bound to the soil and to the soil alone. They cannot deny their Mother, neither can they mutilate her. Our ideal is therefore Indian Nationalism, largely Hindu in its spirit and traditions, becaue the Hindu made the land and the people and persists, by the greatness of his past, his civilisation and his culture and his invincible virility, in holding it, but wide enough also to include the Muslim and his culture and traditions and absorb them into itself. It is possible that the Mahomedan may not recognize the inevitable future and may prefer to throw himself into the opposite scale. If so, the Hindu, with what little Mahomedan help he may get, must win Swaraj both for himself and the Mahomedan inspite of that resistance. There is a sufficient force and manhood in us to do a greater and more difficult task than that, but we lack unity, brotherhood, intensity of single action among ourselves. It is to the creation of that unity, brotherhood and intensity that the Hindu Sabha should direct its whole efforts. Otherwise we must reject it as a disruptive and not a creative agency.

**National Education**

From the beginning of the national movement, inspite of its

enthusiasm, force, innate greatness, a defect has made itself apparent, a fatality of insufficient effectiveness has persued it, which showed that there was a serious flaw somewheie in this brilliant opening of a new era. . . . The nature of that flaw has been made manifest by the period of trial in which, for a time, the real force which made for success has been temporarily withdrawn, so that the weaknesses still inherent in the nation might be discovered and removed. The great flaw was the attempt to combine the new with the old, to subject the conduct of the resurgence of India to the aged, the cautious, the hesitating, men out of sympathy with the spirit of the new age, unable to grasp the needs of the future, afraid to apply the bold and medical methods which could alone transform the nation, sweep out the rottenness in our former corrupt nature and, by purifying Bengal, purify India. It is now apparent that it was the Nationalist element which by its energy, courage, boldness of thought, readiness to accept the conditions of progress, gave the movement its force and vitality. Wherever that force has been withdrawn, the movement has collapsed. The older men have shown themselves utterly unable either to supply the moral force that would sustain the forward march of the nation or the brain-power to grapple with national problems. In swadeshi the force of sentiment supplied, and the persistence of the great mass of silent nationalism in resisting any attempt to draw-back from boycott has preserved the movement to prefer indigenous and boycott foreign goods, but the withdrawal of active Nationalist endeavour has resulted in the stoppage of progress. Swadeshi maintains itself, it no longer advances. National education languishes because the active force has been withdrawn from it, it does not absolutely perish because a certain amount of Nationalist self-devotion has entrenched itself in this last stronghold and holds it against great odds under the most discouraging circumstances. A certain amount only,—because part of the active enthusiasm and self-sacrifice which created the movement, has been deliberately extruded from it in obedience to fear or even baser motives, part has abandoned it in disgust at the degeneration of the system in incapable hands and the best is now finding its self-devotion baffled and deprived of the chance of success by the same incapacity and weakness at headquarters.

The National Council of Education, as it is at present composed has convicted itself of entire incapacity whether to grasp

the meaning of the movement or to preserve or to create the conditions of its success. To the majority of the members it is merely an interesting academical experiment in which they can embody some of their pet hobbies or satisfy a general vague dissatisfaction with the established University system. To others the only valuable part of it is the technical instruction given in its workshops. The two or three who at all regard it as part of a great national movement, are unnerved by fear, scepticism and distruct and, by introducing the principle of Chanakya into its public policy, are depriving it of the first condition of its continued existence. It is folly to expect that the nation at large will either pay heavily or make great sacrifices merely to support an interesting academic experiment still less to allow a few learned men to spoil the intellectual development of the race by indulging their hobbies at the public expense. That the people will not support a mere technical education divorced from that general humanistic training which is essential to national culture, has been sufficiently proved by the failure of Mr. Palit's Technical College to command adequate financial support. Unless this movement is carried on, as it was undertaken, as part of a great movement of national resurgence, unless it is made, visibly to all, a nursery of patriotism and a mighty instrument of national culture it cannot succeed. It is foolish to expect men to make great sacrifices while discouraging their hope and enthusiasm. It is not intellectual recognition of duty that compels sustained self-sacrifice in masses of men; it is hope, it is the lofty ardour of a great cause, it is the enthusiasm of a noble and courageous effort. It is amazing that men calling themselves educated and presuming to dabble with public movements should be blind to the fact that the success or failure of National Education is intimately bound up with and, indeed, entirely depends upon the fortune of the great resurgence which gave it birth. They seem to labour under the delusion that it was an academical and not a national impulse which induced men to support this great effort, and they seek to save the institution from a premature death by exiling from it that enthusiasm that made it possible. They cannot ignore the service done by that enthusiasm, but they regard it merely as the ladder by which they climbed and are busy trying to kick it down. They are really shutting off the steam, yet expect the locomotive to go on.

The successful organisation of the Bengal National College in

Calcutta was the work of its able and enthusiastic Superintendent aided by a body of young and self-sacrificing workers. The National Council which nominally controlled, in reality only hampered it; all that the Council contributed to the system, was its defects. The schools of the Mofussil were created by the enthusiasm of the Nationalist party, the propaganda of its leaders and the ardent self-devotion of little bands of workers who gave their self-sacrifice and enthusiasm to lay the foundations. The Nationalist Council never lifted a single finger to help the Mofussil schools, beyond doling out unsubstantial grants to maintain them merely as necessary feeders of the Calcutta institution. But unless a movement of this kind is supported by wise organisation and energetic propagandism emanating from an active central authority, it must soon sink under the weight of unsolved problems, unsurmounted difficulties and un-amended defects. The curriculum of the Council is extraordinarily elaborate and expensive, and involves a great outlay for the formation of library, laboratory, and workshops, and, arranged as it is on the vicious Western system of driving many subjects at a time into the growing intellect, is slow, cumbrous, a strain on the mind of the students, wasteful of time, impossible without an unusual number of good teachers. The financial problem created is one ot crushing difficulty, yet the Council think they have done their duty when they have created the problem and do not seem even to dream that there is any call on them to solve it. Even for the Calcutta College in whose maintenance they are more keenly interested, they can only make feeble and spasmodic efforts when, as annually happens, there is a deficit in the budge. The academical problem of teaching so many subjects in so short a time without outdoing the exploits of the Calcutta University as a brain-killing and life-shortening machine, does not seem to occur to these lofty and secluded minds. They are content with creating the problem and maintaining it by their system of examinations. Even if funds were forthcoming, there would still be the necessity of providing a regular and plentiful supply of teachers trained in an entirely new system of instruction. This urgent problem the Council has systematically ignored, and not even the elementary steps of establishing a Teacher's Training Class in Calcutta and issuing a series of suitable books in the vernacular has been attempted. The only problems which the Council seems willing to grapple with are,

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## LOOK ON THIS PICTURE, THEN ON THAT

SRI AUROBINDO

Britain, the benevolent, Britain, the mother of Parliaments, Britain, the champion of liberty, Britain, the deliverer of the slave,—such was the sanctified and legendary figure which we have been trained to keep before our eyes from the earliest years of our childhood. Our minds imbued through and through with the colours of that legend, we cherished a faith in the justice and benevolence of Britain more profound, more implicit, more a very part of our beings than the faith of the Christian in Christ or of the Mahomedan in his Prophet. Officials might be oppressive, Viceroys and Lieutenant Governors reactionary, the Secretary of State obdurate, Parliament indifferent, the British public careless, but our faith was not to be shaken. If Anglo-India was unkind, we wooed the British people in India itself. If the British people failed us, we said that it was because the Conservatives were in power. If a Liberal Secretary showed himself no less obdurate, we set it down to his personal failings and confidently awaited justice from a Liberal Government in which he should have no part. If the most Radical of Radical Secretaries condemned us to ago-long subjection to a paternal and absolute bureaucracy, we whispered to the people, 'Wait, War, Britain, the true Britain, the generous, the benevolent, the lover and giver of freedom, is only sleeping; she shall awake again and we shall see her àngelic and transfigured beauty'. Where precisely was this Britain we believed in, no man could say, but we would not give up our faith,

'Credoquia impossible;'—I believe because it is impossible, had become our political creed. Other countries might be selfish, violent, greedy, tyrannical, unjust; in other countries politics might be a continual readjustment of conflicting interests and clashing strengths. But Britain, the Britain of our dreams, was guided only by the light of truth and justice and reason; high ideals noble impulses, liberal instincts, these were the sole guides of her political actions,—by the lustre of these bright moral fires she guided her mighty steps through an admiring and worshipping world. That was the dream; and so deeply had it lodged in our imaginations that not only the professed Loyalists, the men of moderation, but even the leading Nationalists, those branded as Extremists, could not altogether shake off its influence. Only recently Srijut Bipin Chandra Pal at Rajamundry told his hearers that those who thought the British Government would crush us if we tried by passive resistance to make administration impossible, held too low an opinion of British character and British civilization. We fancy Srijut Bipin Chandra watching from the south the welter of official anarchy in East Bengal and the Punjab must have modified to a certain extent his trust in the bearing-power of British high-mindedness. We ourselves, though we had our own views about British character and civilization, have allowed ourselves to speculate whether it was not just possible that the British bureaucracy might be sufficiently tender of their reputation to avoid extreme, violent and arbitrary measures.

That was the dream. The reality to which we awake, is Rawalpindi and Jamalpore. The events in the Punjab are an instructive lesson in the nature of bureaucratic rule. The Punjab has, since the Mutiny, been a quite, loyal and patient province; whatever burdens have been laid on it, its people have borne without complaint; whatever oppression might go on, it gave rise to no such clamour and agitation as the least arbitrary act would be met with in Bengal. How have the bureaucracy treated this loyal and quite people ? What fruit have they reaped from their loyalty, the men who saved the British Empire in 1857; Intolerable burdens, insolent treatment, rude oppression. The Anglo-Indian cry is that disloyal Bengal has infected loyal Punjab with the virus of sedition. Undoubtedly, the new spirit which has gone out like a mighty fire from Bengal lighting up the whole of India, has found its most favourable ground in the Punjab, but a fire

does not burn without fuel, and where there is the most revolutionary spirit there, we can always be sure, has been the most oppression. The water tax, the land laws, the Colonization Act legalizing the oppressions and illegalities under which the Punjab landholders and peasantry have groaned, had generated the feeling of an intolerable burden, and when a few fearless men brought to the people the message of self-help, the good tidings that in their own hands lay their own salvation, the men of the Punjab found again their ancient spirit and determined to stand upright in the strength of their manhood. They committed no act of violence they broke no law. They confined themselves to sending in a statement of their grievances to the Government and passively abstaining from the use of the Canal water so that the bureaucracy might not benefit by an iniquitous tax. The rulers of India know well that if passive resistance is permitted, the artificial fabric of bureaucratic despotism will fall down like the walls of Jericho before mere sound, with the mere breath of a people's revolution. To save the situation, they resorted to the usual device of stifling the voice of the people into silence. On a frivolous pretext they struck at the *Panjabee.* The only result was that the calm resolution of the people received its first tinge of fierce indignation Then the bureaucracy hurriedly resolved to lop off the tall heads—the policy of the tyrant Tarquin which is always the resort of men without judgment or statesmanship. Lala Hansraj, one of the most revered and beloved of the Punjab leaders, a man grown grey in the quiet and selfless service of his country, Ajit Singh, the nationalist orator, and other men of repute and leading were publicly threatened with prosecution and imprisonment as criminals and an enquiry begun with great pomp and circumstance. Then followed a phenomenon unprecedented, we think, in recent Indian history. For the first time the man in that workshop and the man in the street have risen in revolt for purely political reasons in anger at an attack on purely political leaders. The distinction, which Anglo-India has striven to draw between the 'Babu class' and the people, has in the Punjab ceased to exist. It was probably the panic at this alarming phenomenon which hurried the Punjab Government into an extraordinary *coup d'etat,* also unprecedented in recent Indian history. The result is that we have a strange companion picture to that dream of a benevolent and angelic Britain,—a city of unarmed men terrorised by the

military, the leaders of the people hurried from their daily avocations to prison, siegeguns pointed at the town, police rifle ready to fire on any group of five men or more to be seen in the street, bail refused to respectable pleaders and barristers from sheer terror of their influence. Look on this picture, then on that.

And what next ? It is too early to say. This much only is certain that a new stage begins in the struggle between democracy and bureaucracy, a new chapter opens in the history of the progress of Indian Nationalism.

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## THE LIMIT OF FORBEARANCE*

SRI AUROBINDO

The Jamalpore affair demonstrates the urgent necessity of our organizing defence measures to protect our person and property, our hearth and home, and above all, the honour of our women and the sanctity or our shrines, in the troubled times of a terrible transition. The desecrated shrine, the outraged sanctity of religion, the blood or our kindred, the offended honour of our cause and country—all cry out for succour and vindication. They lay bare the policy of the alien bureaucracy and show the helpless nature of our position in the absence of the necessary organization.

The Moderate leader thundering from his castle in Colootollah counsels moderation. He advises rising superior to "lowly passions," and contemplates holding a mass meeting to pass some resolutions and exhibits perfervid eloquence. And the *Sanjibani* recommends the removal of the officers of the Eastern Bengal Government because they have failed to maintain peace and order in the province. They decline to believe that the Barisal barbarities, the Comilla cruelties and the Jamalpore *julums* are the natural and inevitable results of a persistent policy which

*This article was written in the background of Mahomedan hooliganism at Jamalpore in the Mymensingh District, resulting in the beating of defenceless Hindus and the looting of their property, in the outraging of their religion and the breaking of the image of their goddess Basanti. This disgraceful episode engineered by the British bureaucracy, took place in the afternoon of April 21, 1907.

continues inspite of a change of the head of the Administration. And consequently they hope to quench the flames with a penny squirt when every house is ablaze.

The adoption of this policy synchronizes with the Partition of Bengal. It first manifested itself in the Harrison Road a case in which students were prosecuted for picketing in Barabazar a—case in which the pusillanimity of the leaders and their incapacity to read aright the signs of the times did more harm to our cause and country than attempts at persecution on the part of the Government could ever hope to do.

At Barisal, this policy was responsible for the shedding of innocent blood. A blessing in disguise, it helped the spread of that spirit of nationalism which has taught us to prefer death to dishonour and made us eager to vindicate the political manhood of the nation. It would be superfluous to recount how at Noakhali, at Comilla and at Jamalpore this policy has been responsible for those disturbances which have made the people realize the urgent necessity of organizing measures of self-defence. For us defence now means not running to the law-courts of the foreigner but defending ourselves like men.

The Moderate leaders will not understand this. At Berhampore they would not go beyond condemning the action of the "local authorities" for the Comilla cruelties. And now they recommend rising superior to "lowly passions"—and advise the removal of the local officials as if they were responsible for the Jamalpore incidents and not a persistent policy adopted since the manifestation of the spirit of nationalism in order to crush it out of existence.

At Comilla, the authorities were indifferent—indeed, their conduct lends colour to the suspicion that they were not only glad at the occurrence of the disgraceful incidents, but had been privy to the schemes which had been formulated to bring about the discomfiture of the Hindus.

On the 2nd April our Mymensingh correspondent wired—"Rumours are rife that disturbances similar to those in Comilla may occur sooner or later. On enquiry I find that the rumour is not altogether unfounded, and it is reported that the Mahomedans are holding meetings at night to read *wiz* and for other consultations. Will the authorities behave in the same way as they did in Comilla or take time by the forelock by a sifting

enquiry" ?

On the 8th, a letter from a Mymensing friend reached us in which it was distinctly stated that Maulavis had been instigating Mahomedans against Hindus.

Thus the storm that burst over Jamalpore was neither sudden nor unexpected. And the authorities could have prevented it had they so willed.

Still we are asked to exercise moderation and rise superior to "lowly passions." Next perhaps, they would ask us to accept the doctrine of an endless transmigration of the souls, by the assumptions of which the value of each individual creature would become illusory.

The time for pretences is past; and we must face the situation boldly and bravely irrespective of consequences. The occasion requires that we should rise equal to it. At Comilla, the need of organizing measures of self-defence became apparent. At Jamalpore it becomes imminent. The old and obsolete methods of political agitation will no longer serve our purpose. New occasions teach new duties,—time makes ancient good uncouth. And the new spirit that is breathing on the face of the land and that is to bring us our salvation, teaches us that there is a limit beyond which forbearance ceases to be a virtue.

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## GRADUATED BOYCOTT

Sri Aurobindo

The opponents of the New Spirit have discovered that boycott is an illusion. An entire and sweeping boycott, they say, is a moral and physical impossibility; and their infallible economic authority, Mr. Gokhale, has found out that a graduated boycott is an economic impossibility. They point to the failure of the thorough-going boycott in Bengal as a proof of the first assertion; the second, they think, requires no proof, for how can what Mr. Gokhale has said be wrong? This assertion of the impossibility of a graduated boycott is an answer to the reasoning by which Mr. Tilak has supported the movement in Maharashtra. In the first days of the movement Mr. Tilak published a series of vigorous and thoughtful articles in the *Kesari* on Boycott as a Political Yoga. He advocated the entire exclusion of British goods, the preference of Swadeshi goods at a sacrifice when they were attainable, and when unattainable the preference of any foreign goods not produced in the British Empire. To the argument that this programme was not immediately practicable in its completeness, he replied that as in Yoga, so in the boycott, "even a little of this *dharma* saves us from a mighty peril." The mighty peril is the entire starvation of the country by foreign exploiters and its complete and hopeless dependence on aliens for almost all articles of common use. Even a slight immediate diminution of this dependence would be a great national gain and could by degrees be extended until the full boycott policy became

an accomplished fact. Mr. Tilak, with his shrewd practical insight, was able to see clearly that immediate and complete success of a thorough-going boycott was not possible in India but that a gradually efficacious boycott would naturally result from a thorough-going boycott campaign. What Mr. Tilak foresaw, is precisely what is happening.

The entire exclusion of British-made goods is the political aspect of the boycott with which we do not deal in this article. Is it a fact that as an economic weapon a graduated boycott is impossible? Boycott may be graduated in several ways. First, by the gradual growth of the idea of excluding foreign goods a steadily increasing check may be put on the import of particular foreign articles and a corresponding impulse given to the use of the same articles produced in India. A Government by imposing a gradually increasing duty on an import in successive tariffs, may kill it by degrees instead of immediately imposing a prohibitive rate; the growth of the boycott sentiment may automatically exercise the same kind of increasing check. The growth of the sentiment will help on the production of the indigenous article and the increased production of the indigenous articles will help on the growth of the sentiment. Thus mutually stimulated, Swadeshi and Boycott will advance with equal and ever more rapid steps, until the shrinkage of the foreign import reaches the point where it is no longer profitable to import it. The process can only be checked by insufficiency of capital in the country available or willing to invest itself in Swadeshi manufacture. But the growth of the boycott sentiment will of itself encourage and is encouraging capital to invest in this direction; for so much boycott means so much *sure market* for Swadeshi article and therefore an increase of capital willing to invest in Swadeshi manufacture. The increased production of the Swadeshi article in its turn means more money in the hands of the mercantile class and of investors in Swadeshi Companies and therefore more capital *available* for investment in Swadeshi manufacture. We fail to see how in this sense an automatically graduated boycott is impossible; on the contrary, it seems to us economically inevitable, provided only the boycott sentiment is increasingly embraced by the people.

Boycott may be graduated in another way. When the boycott was declared in Bengal, it was declared specially against cloth, sugar and salt and only generally against other articles. It is,

therefore, the imports of English piece-goods, Liverpool salt, and, though only to a slight extent, of foreign sugar into Bengal which have suffered. When this specific boycott has been proved effective; it may extended to other articles. Thus, the boycott may be graduated not only in the incidence on particular articles, but in its extent and range. The graduation on a specific boycott may be partly artificial and partly automatic. It is artificial when the leaders of the people preach an economic *jehad* against particular foreign goods and the people accept their decision. But this artificial boycott can only succeed when there is already an incipient industry in the corresponding Swadeshi article or some existing means of supply, however partial, which may be stimulated or extended by the boycott. Liverpool salt has been affected because 'Karkach' is available; British piece-goods have been affected because there was already a mill-industry and a handloom industry which have been enormously stimulated by the boycott, as is shown by the wholesale return of the weaver class to their trade in Bengal and by the increase in the number of weaving mills and the splendid dividends which the existing concerns are paying. On the other hand, the campaign against foreign sugar has not been successful because the proper substitute is not available. Yarns have not been affected because the spinning industry in India is a negligible quantity while the demand for yarn has enormously increased. In time a *jehad* against foreign yarn will become feasible. But the specific boycott may also be automatic when the general sentiment of boycott attack a particular article for which a substitute exists in the country. To take a small instance, the market for steel trunks sent ready-manufactured from England is decreasing to such an extent that failures of dealers in steel trunks are beginning to be recorded. Here again, we fail to see the impossibility of a graduated boycott. It is quite true that in the very beginning the increase of the stimulated Swadeshi article may not be sufficient to blot out entirely the increase in the import; and the superficial and hasty may proclaim the failure of the boycott. But by the growth of the boycott the increase of the Swadeshi article must progressively swell and the increase of the import must progressively shrink until it is turned into an actual decrease. The fact that the success of the boycott is progressive and not miraculous, need not frighten or disappoint any sensible and determined boycotter. it is true also that the

growth of Swadeshi may actually stimulate for a time the import of particular foreign articles, such as machinery or yarns; but the stimulation is temporary and, as soon as part of our growing capital is free and willing to invest in new fields, the graduated boycott will naturally extend itself in these directions sooner than in others.

The theory therefore that a graduated boycott is impossible, seems to us to have no foundation either of facts or of reasoning. Whatever the fate of its use as a political weapon, its success as an economical weapon depends solely on the zeal with which it is preached and the readiness with which it is received by the people.

# 43

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SURENDRA NATH

SRI AUROBINDO

The appearance of Babu Surendra Nath Banerji as an exponent of the New Nationalism is a phenomenon which shows the spread of the new spirit, but, we fear, nothing more. We congratulate Babu Surendra Nath on his conversion to the New Nationalism, but we are not sure that we can congratulate the New Nationalism on its convert. Nationalism is, after all, primarily an emotion of the heart and a spiritual attitude and only secondarily an intellectual conviction. Its very foundation is the worship of national liberty as the one political deity and the readiness to consider all things well lost if only freedom is won. "Let my name be blasted", cried Danton, "but let France be saved". "Let my name, life, possessions all go", cries the true Nationalist, "let all that is dear to me perish, but let my country be free". But Babu Surendra Nath is not prepared to consider the world well lost for liberty. He wishes to drive bargains with God, to buy liberty from Him in the cheapest market, at the smallest possible price. Until now he was the leader of those who desired to reach a qualified liberty by safe and comfortable means. He is now for an unqualified liberty; and since the way to absolute liberty cannot be perfectly safe and comfortable, he wants to make it as safe and comfortable as he can. It is evident that his conversion to the new creed is only a half and half conversion. He has acknowledged the deity, but he is not prepared for the sacrifice. It is always a danger

to a new religion when it receives converts from among strong adherents of the old, for they are likely to bring in with them the spirit of the outworn creed and corrupt with it the purity of the new tenets. If leaders of the old school wish to be accepted as exponents of the New Nationalism, they must bring to it not only intellectual assent, but a new and changed heart—a new heart of courage and enthusiastic self-sacrifice, to replace the old heart of selfish timidity and distrust of the national strength.

In the leading article of last Friday's *Bengalee* some very important admissions are made. The unlimited possibilities of the organized national strength of India are acknowledged without reservation. "There is no limit to what they can do. We at any rate would set no limits to their ambition. . . We want our country to be as great in its own way as other countries are in theirs. And we are determined to secure our rightful place in the federation of humanity by methods which are least wasteful in their nature and *would soonest bring us to the assured destination.*" The deferation of humanity is one of those sounding phrases dear to Babu Surendra Nath, which have no relation to actuality; but the rightful place of India among the nations, federated or unfederated, is one which cannot admit of any the least restriction on her liberty. And the description of the methods to be used at least rules petitioning out of court; for petitioning is certainly wasteful in its nature and would not bring us soonest,—nor, indeed at all—to our assured destination. There is more behind. "*Where is the room for compromise in spiritual life* ? Nobody has a right to tell us in regard to a question like this, thus far you shall go and no farther. National expansion and self-realization is a sacred duty which we cannot lay aside at the bidding of any authority above or below. The charter here is a charter from on high and no mundane authority has a right to undo it". All this is admirable. It is true that the writer in the next breath says, "We have no quarrel with anybody who does not stand in our way",—an obvious truism,—and invites the Government "not to block the way", promising it as a reward "a happy and not inglorious transformation at no distant date". But the bureaucracy knows, as well as the writer knows, that transformation is only an euphemism for translation to a better world, and there is not the slightest chance of its listening to this bland invitation. However, the fact stands out that Babu Surendra Nath has declared for absolute autonomy to be

arrived at by methods which, among other nights, *would soonest bring us to the assured destination.*

Unfortunately, the rest of the article is devoted to carefully undoing the effect of the first half. It is practically an attempt to controvert the position which we have taken up in this journal. Our position is that it is imperatively necessary for this nation to enter into an immediate struggle for nation liberty which we must win at any cost; that in this struggle we must be inspired and guided hy the teachings of history and those glorious examples which show how even nations, degraded, enslaved and internally disunited, can rapidly attain to freedom and unity; and that for this purpose the great necessity is to awake in the nation a burning, an irresistible, an unanimous will to be free. The *Bengalee* denies all these positions. We must win liberty, it holds, not by an immediate struggle but by a long and weary journey: not by heavy sacrifices, but in the spirit of a Banyia, by grudging, limited and carefully-calculated sacrifices. We are not to be guided by the concrete lessons of history, but by vague and intangible rhetorical generalisations about "our increased knowledge and wisdom, our enlarged affections and interests of the present day." We are to curb our will to be free by a "trained intelligence" which teaches us that we are not a homogeneous nation and must therefore tolerate differences.

We will content ourselves at present with pointing out that the *Bengalee's* answer to us is neither effective nor self-consistent. We have tried to establish our position by definite arguments and appeals to well-known facts of human nature and human experience; the *Bengalee* simply denies our conclusions in general terms without advancing a single definite argument. We can only conclude that our contemporary has no definite arguments to advanee. The confusion of his ideas is appalling. We are to choose for the attainment of liberty the method which will bring us soonest to our destination; but we must at the same time insist on making it a long and weary journey. We must have the determination to get liberty "at any cost"; but we must not carry out that derermination in practice; no, in practice, we must get it not at any cost but at the smallest cost possible. We must really ask the *Bengalee* to clear up this tangle of ideas and discover some definite arguments before it again asks the Nationalists to confine themselves to realizing their ideas in practice and to abstain from

"quarrelling with everybody who differs from them." It would be no doubt very gratifying to the *Bengalee* not to be quarrelled with, in other words, to escape from the annoyance of finding its intellectual positions and its methods, assailed; but we cannot gratify it. So far as possible, our ideas are being realized in practice wherever Nationalism is strong; but for their full effectiveness they need the whole nation at their back and it is therefore our first duty to convince the nation by exposing pseudo-Nationalism in all its workings.

We shall meet the *Bengalee's* positions one by one hereafter. Meanwhile we take the liberty of offering one suggestion to Babu Surendra Nath Banerji. This veteran leader is a declared opportunist, who believes, as he has himself said, in expediency more than in principles. He seeks to lead the nation not by instructing it but by watching its moods and making use of them. Well and good; but even an opportunist leader must keep pace with public opinion, if he does not even go half a step in front of it; he must know which way it is going to leap before the leap is taken, and not follow halting some paces behind. The nation moves forward with rapidity; Babu Surendra Nath pants ineffectually after it. It is not by such hesitating pronouncements that he can retain the national leadership. The times are revolutionary, and revolutionary times demand men who know their own mind and are determined to make it the mind of the nation.

# 44

## NATIONALISM, NOT EXTREMISM

SRI AUROBINDO

It is a curious fact that even after so many months of sustained propaganda and the most clear and definite statements of the new politics, there should still be so much confusion as to the attitude of the Nationalist party and the elementary issues they have raised. This confusion is to some extent due to wilful distortion and deliberate evasion of the true issues. The ultraloyalist publicists especially, Indian or Anglo-Indian, are obliged to ignore the true position of the party, misnamed Extremists, because they are unable to meet its trenchant and irresistible logic and commonsense. But with the great majority of Indian politicians the misapprehension is genuine. The political teaching of the New School is so novel and disturbing to their settled political ideas,—or rather the conventional, abstract, second-hand formulas which take the place of ideas,—that they cannot even grasp its true nature and turn from it with repugnance before they have given themselves time to understand it. The most obstinate of these misapprehensions is the idea that the new politics is a counsel of despair, a mad revolutionary fury induced by Curzonian reaction. We can afford to pass over this mis-apprehension with contempt when it is put forward by foolish, prejudiced or conceited critics who are merely trying to bring odium on the movement or to express their enlightened superiority over younger politicians. But when a fair and scrupulous opponent honestly trying to understand the Nationalist position falls into the same error, we are

bound to meet it and once more clear our position beyond misapprehension or doubt.

Some frinds of ours have thought that we were unnecessarily harsh and even unjust in our criticism of Dr. Rash Behary Ghosh's speech in the Supreme Legislative Council. They urge that Dr. Ghosh at least presented the Extremist position with great energy, clearness, courage, and did it with the greater effect as one who himself stood outside our party. We have every respect for Dr. Rash Behary Ghosh personally; he is perhaps for foremost jurist in India, a scholar and master of the English tongue, a mine of literature, in possession of a style of his own, too rich and scholarly to be turned to such everyday uses as a Legislative Council speech. But eminence in law and literature do not necessarily bring with them a grasp of politics. Dr. Ghosh has only recently turned his attention to this field and has not been long enough in touch with the actualities of politics to get a real grasp of them. It is, therefore, natural that he should be misled by names instead of penetrating beyond names to the true aspects of current politics. The ordinary nicknames of Moderate and Extremist do not properly describe the parties which they are used to label; and they are largely responsible for much confusion of ideas as to the real differences between the two schools. Dr. Ghosh evidently labours, like many others, under the obsession of the world Extremist. He imagines that the essential difference between the parties is a difference in attitude and in the intensity of feeling. The Extremists, in his view, are men embittered by oppresison which makes even wise men mad; full of passionate repining at their "more than Egyptian bondage", exasperated by bureaucratic reaction, despairing of redress at the hands of the British Government or the British nation, they are advocating an extreme attitude and extreme methods in a spirit of desperate impatience. The Extremist propaganda is, therefore, a protest against misgovernment and a movement of despair driving towards revolt. We are unable to accept this statement of the Nationalist position. On the contrary, it so successfully represents the new politics to be what they are not, that we choose it as a starting-point for our explanation of what they are.

The new movement is not primarily a protest against bad Government,—it is a protest against the continuance of British control; whether that control is used well or ill, justly or unjustly,

is a minor and unessential consideration. It is not born of a disappointed expectation of admission to British citizenship,—it is born of a conviction that the time has come when India can, should and will, become a great, free and united nation. It is not a negative current of destruction, but a positive constructive impulse towards the making of modern India. It is not a cry of revolt and despair, but a gospel of national faith and hope. Its true description is not Extremism, but Democratic Nationalism.

These are the real issues. There art at present not two parties in India, but three,—the Loyalists, the Moderates and the Nationalists. The Loyalists would be satisfied with good government by British rulers and a limited share in the administration; the Moderates desire self-government within the British Empire, but are willing to wait for it indefinitely; the Nationalists would be satisfied with nothing less than independence whether within the Empire, if that be possible, or outside it; they believe that the nation cannot and ought not to wait but must bestir itself immediately, if it is not to perish as a nation. The Loyalists believe that Indians have not the capacities and qualities necessary for freedom and even if they succeed in developing the necessary fitness, they would do better for themselves and mankind by remaining as a province of the British Empire; any attempt at freedom will, they think, be a revolt against Providence and can bring nothing but disaster on the country. The Loyalist view is that India cannot, should not and will not be a free, great and united nation. The Moderates believe the nation to be too weak and disunited to aim at freedom; they would welcome independence if it came, but they are not convinced that we have or shall have in the measurable future the means or strength to win it or keep it if won. They, therefore, put forward Council Self-Government as their aim and are unwilling to attempt any methods which presuppose strength and cohesion in the nation. The Moderate view is that India may eventually be united, self-governing within limits and prosperous, but not free and great. The Nationalists hold that Indians are as capable of freedom as any subject nation can be and their defects are the result of servitude and can only be removed by the struggle for freedom; that they have the strength, and, if they get the will, can create the means to win independence. They hold that the choice is not between autonomy and provincial home rule or between freedom and dependence but between freedom and

national decay and death. They hold, finally, that the past history of our country and the present circumstances are of such a kind that the great unifying tendencies hitherto baffled by insuperable obstacles have at last found the right conditions for success. They believe that the fated hour for Indian unification and freedom has arrived. In brief, they are convinced that India should strive to be free, that she can be free and that she will, by the impulse of her past and present, be inevitably driven to the attempt and the attainment of national self-realization. The Nationalist creed is a gospel of faith and hope.

# 45

## THE LEVERAGE OF FAITH

SRI AUROBINDO

It is said of Guru Nanak that on the eve of his departure from the body he was asked to name a successor to his *gaddi.* A great strom was raging at the time—the disturbance of nature synchronizing with the passing away of a great spirit. Nanak was then sitting under a tree surrounded by his disciples. It was evening, and the Guru perceiving that his *chellas* badly needed food and drink, asked his sons Sri Chand and Lakshi Chand to go in quest of food. But the sons inherited none of the spiritual qualities of their father; they thought him to be no better than a maniac and were not inclined to take his request seriously; rather they mocked at the idea of a search for food when none could stir out of doors for the wild rain and storm without. Nanak then turned to a devoted disciple who simply enquired where he should go for food and was told that he had only to ask of the tree under which they were then sitting and it would give them all they required. The disciple did Nanak's bidding and, as the story goes, was rewarded with sufficiency of sweetmeats. Nanak went afterwards with his disciples to the river-side and when, on the way, they came across a dead body, he bade his sons partake of this strange food. His sons took the command as conclusive proof of their father's lunacy, but the disciple was prepared to obey unquestioningly and only paused to ask from where to begin, whether from the head or from the foot. Nanak, entirely satisfied with the steadfast faith of his disciple, named him the successor to his *gaddi*

in preference to his own sons.

It is not given to all to possess this heroic spiritual faith which all religious teachers have insisted on as the first preliminary to any difficult *sadhan*; but the moral underlying it is one which all experience justifies. Faith is the first condition of success in every great undertaking. It is no exaggeration to say that faith removes mountains. It is faith that makes the men of will and thought persevere inspite of apparently insurmountable difficulties. They start with a strong confidence in the ultimate success of a noble undertaking and are therefore never daunted by difficulties, however formidable. Faith is the one predominating characteristic of all great souls. The vision of faith penetrates into the remote future and turns the impossible into the possible. In the region of politics faith is the result of imagination working in the light of history; it takes its stand on reason and experience and aspires into the future from the firm ground of the past. Other nations have risen from the lowest depths of degradation—the weaknesses which prevent us from trying bold and effective remedies were common to all subject nations before us. It is by nerving the nation's heart with inspiring literature and inciting it to struggle for emancipation that freedom has been recovered. For a subject people there is no royal road to emancipation. They must wade to it through struggle, sacrifice, slaughter, it necessary. History suggests no short cut. Why should it then involve a strain on our faith to believe that if we are only prepared for the necessary sacrifice, we also shall gain the end. Other nations also were weak, disunited and denationalised like ourselves. It is the rallying cry of freedom that combined their scattered units drawing them together with a compelling and magical attraction. Those who would win freedom, must first imbue the people with an overpowering conviction that freedom is the one thing needful. Without a great ideal there can be no great movement. Small baits of material advantages will not nerve them to high endeavour and heroic self-sacrifice; it is only the idea of national freedom and national greatness that has that overmastering appeal. We must not bend the knee to others but try to be worthy of our past—here is an ideal which, if set forth with conviction and power, cannot fail to inspire self-sacrificing action. We need faith above all things, faith in ourselves, faith in the nation, faith in India's destiny. A dozen men rendered invincible by a strong faith in their future

have in other times spread the contagion of nationalism to the remotest corner of vast countries. Unbelief is blind—it does not see far ahead; neither stimulates strength nor inspires action. The lack of this faith has kept our Moderate politicians tied down to a worn-out ideal which has lost its credibility. No man can lead a rising nation unless he has this faith first of all, that what other great men have done before him he also can do as well, if not better,—that the freedom other nations have won we also can win, if only we have the faith, the will.

# 46

# THE ESSENCE OF THE NEW MOVEMENT : THE EXTREMIST'S POSITION DEFINED

SRI AUROBINDO

"It is easy to scoff and rail; but it is a different thing altogether to lay down a practical programme. The Extremists or the masked Moderates whose number is legion in Bengal at least, are adepts in the art of deriding people who cannot talk nonsense; but if they are asked what the policy should be, and where they would lead the people they get non-plussed and beat a precipitate retreat. They forget that by behaving like maniacs, they are only reducing the chance of self-government being extended to the people to a shadow." The above is an extract from an editorial appearing in a recent issue of our contemporary, *The Hindu Patriot.*

Our reply to it is that the writer forgets that although "programmes" and "policies" have their undoubted value as a factor in the building up of national life, and thus although no nation-builder will ever dream of dispensing with them, still neither logically nor chronologically have they ever come first in the history of any national revival. It is the New Thought or the New Ideal, not any cut and dried "programme" or "policy", such as the writer in the *Hindu Patriot* demands, that has ever been found to inaugurate any progressive movement in the world's history. It is the New Thought and this New Ideal that, like a Heaven-sent, beneficent messenger of glad tidings to a stricken people, must communicate the first impulse to the national mind

and give it the needed buoyancy and strength. It is these which must first take possession of the mind and will of a people, before the first step forward could at all be taken by them. "Programmes" and "Policies" are more or less products of thought,—the results of a logical appreciation of what is best for a people under the circumstances of any particular case. But they do not add one single cubit to the stature of a people's strength; and it is this strength which has so much to do with the shaping of all "programmes" and "policies." The unsophisticated writer in the *Hindu Patriot* forgets that the discovery of a new strength in us such as would justify the inauguration of a new programme or a new policy may never come from a mere *understanding* of what is good or what is bad for a people to do; but it is the influx of a New Spirit that alone has the power of lifting us out of the rut of our environments on to a plane from whence we may command the vision of new and better world. The time for remodelling old policies and programmes and chalking out new ones comes after, not before. For it is the New Thought, the New Ideal, or the New Spirit that really presides at the birth of a Nation. It is this New Movement that really counts for anything at the time of a national re-awakening so that laved and washed in the holy waters of its life, we may once more feel our strength removed at every pore and in every nerve of our being, and glad and joyous of heart we no longer lag behind but come forward to take our places in the line of battle.

What, then, is this New Thought that is trusted to do so much for us and renovate our national life, if only we would care to surrender ourselves to its beneficent influence ? To get at the core of this New Thought, it is necessary in the first place to say as shortly as we can, what it is not. It is *not* the offspring of a spirit of revenge; it is *not* the advocating of mere measures of coercion and retaliation; it is *not* a mere suggestion of despair. Mr. Nehru, who presided at the recent U.P. Provincial Conference held at Allahabad, referred to the New Movement in the following terms—"A new school of thought has lately arisen in India holding extreme political doctrines, and advocating measures of coercion and retaliation to obtain redress for their wrongs"; and he calls the methods of Extremists as "evolved out of the depths of despair." No; the New Thought or the New Spirit is in no way the product of any passing wave of feeling, however keen and

poignant that feeling might be; for then it will be mere weakness in disguise. It is, on the contrary, something very vital and life-giving. It raises fundamental issues and demands of educated public opinion in India a deliberate and well-considered answer. The New Thought proclaims form the housetop that India *has* a right to live in history as a separate nation with a destiny and a mission all her own; and further that that mission and that destiny could never conceivably form part of the destiny and mission of a foreign people exercising political and economic predominance over her. The New Thought holds and declares as a fundamental axiom of political philosophy that the countenance of foreign *predominance* or overlordship in any shape or form, political, industrial, intellectual, social or religious, is fatal to the continuance and growth of self-conscious life among a people subject to such overlordship; and the New Thought, therefore, asks—shall India be permitted to have an independent destiny which she would be at liberty to work out in her own way; or shall she be dragged at the chariot-wheels of a superior Power which shall dictate terms and conditions upon which she should be permitted to grow ?

The issue which the New Thought thus raises is very vital and fundamental and the answer which it proposes to give is that the time has come for India to declare with one voice that in the interests of Indian national growth, Indian questions should henceforth cease to be judged and decided from the point of view of British predominance and that, therefore, the creed, *India for the Indians*, should be substituted for *India for the British* and be the chief and predominating feature of Indian politics.

Thus the removal of Western *predominance* from Eastern politics, forms as it were, the central idea of the New Movement and is justified on the ground that the existence or continuance of any form of foreign predominance, social, intellectual, religious economic or political, is irreconcilable with the rise and development of a self-conscious India. The New Movement must not, accordingly, be treated as in essence an emotional Anti-British outburst, although it asserts for the first time in recent Indian history, the capacity of the Indians to life and progress without any reference to the British Government. The Nationalist Movement with its cry, *India for the Indians*, is thus as far removed as possible from mere hatred of the foreigner; for it derives its strength and its inspiration from that ground-fact of political

history that the unchallenged continuance of every form of foreign overlordship, domination or supremacy is wholly irreconcilable with the growth and enrichment of a national life. Judged from this point of view, the Swadeshi Movement, the Boycott Movement (both in its industrial and political aspects), and the new Educational Movements are the natural and legitimate outcome of the desire of the Indian peoples to assert and vindicate their inalienable right to achieve their own salvation—to work out their own ideals, in their own way.

It would thus appear that the Nationalist propaganda drawing its nourishment from the very root of things, is bound to spread and succeed as the days go by and that the only obstacles to its progress are the inevitable misunderstandings about its object and scope under the circumstances of present-day Indian public life.

# 47

## THE RESULTS OF THE CONGRESS

SRI AUROBINDO

The great Calcutta Congress, the centre of so many hopes and fears, is over. Of the various antagonistic or contending forces which are now being hurled together into that Medea's cauldron of confused and ever fiercer struggle out of which a free and regenerated India is to arise, each one had its own acute fears and fervent hopes for the results of this year's Congress. Anglo-India and Tory England feared that the Extremists might capture the assembly, they hoped that a split would be created, and, as a result, the Congress either come to an end and land itself in the limbo of forgotten and abortive things or else, by the expulsion of the new life and the new spirit from its midst, sink into the condition of a dead-alive ineffectual body associated with the Government and opposing it now and then only for form's sake. Liberal England represented by the Cottons and Wedderburns hoped that the unsustaining and empty concessions Mr. Morely is dangling before the eyes of the Moderate leaders might bring back the Congress entirely into its old paths and the new spirit be killed by the show of kindness. It feared that the National Assembly might see through the deception and publicly demand that there should be either substantial concessions or none at all. In India itself the Moderates feared that the forward party in Bengal might force through the Congress strong resolutions on Boycott and other alarming matters or else avenge their failure by wrecking the Congress itself, but they hoped that by an imposing show of

ex-Presidents on the platform, by the reverence due to the age and services of Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, by the dominant personality of the lion of the Bombay Corporation, by the strong contingents from Bombay city, Gujerat and other provinces still unswept by new brooms, by the use of tactics and straining in their favour all the advantages of an indefinite and nebulous constitution, they would quell the Extremists, prevent the bringing forward of the Boycott and keep absolute control of the Congress. The forward party hoped to leave the impress of the new thought and life on the Congress of 1906, to get entire Self-Government recognized as the ideal of the Congress and Swadeshi and Boycott as the means, and to obtain a public recognition of the new ideas in the Presidential address, but they feared that the realization of such considerable results would be too much to hope for in a single year and a fierce and prolonged struggle would be needed to overcome the combined forces of conservatism, timidity, self-distrust and self-interest, which have amalgamated into the loyalist Moderate party. Such was the state of mind of the conflicting parties when the Calcutta Congress was opened on the 26th.

Today on the 30th, we can look back and count our gains and losses. The hopes of Anglo-India have been utterly falsified and the Anglo-Indian journals cannot conceal their rage and disappointment. The loudest in fury is our dear old perfervid *Englishman* which cries out in hollow tones of menace that if the Congress tolerates Boycott, the Congress itself will not be tolerated. The hopes and fears of Liberal England have been only partially fulfilled and partially falsified; the Congress has definitely demanded Colonial Self-Government and it has accepted the offered concessions of Mr. Morley only as steps towards that irreducible demand; the new spirit, instead of being killed by kindness, has declared in no uncertain voice its determination to live. The fears of the Moderates have been falsified; no strongly worded resolutions have been passed : neither has the Congress been wrecked by the rapid development of contending parties in our midst. Their hopes too have been falsified. Nothing was more remarkable in the present Congress than its anti-autocratic temper and the fiery energy with which it repudiated any attempt to be dictated to by the authority of recognized leaders. Charges of want of reverenee and of rowdyism have been freely brought against this year's Congress. To the first charge we answer that

the reverence has been transferred from persons to the ideal of the motherland; it is no longer Pherozshah Mehta or even Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji who can impose silence and acquiescence on the delegates of the nation by their presence and authority, for the delegates feel that they owe a deeper reverence and a higher duty to their country. Henceforth the leaders can only deserve reverence by acting in the spirit of the chief servants of their country and not in the spirit of masters and dictators. This change is one of the most genuine signs of political progress which we have observed in our midst. The charge of rowdyism merely means that the Congres, instead of a dead unanimity and mechanical cheers, has this time shown lively signs of real interest and real feeling. It is ridiculous to contend that in a national assembly the members should confine themselves to signs of approval only and conceal their disapproval; in no public assembly in the world, having a political nature, is any such rule observed; and the mother of Parliaments itself is in the habit of expressing its disapproval with far greater vehemence than was done in this years Congress. It was due to this growth of deep feeling and of the spirit of independence that the spells on which the Moderate leaders had depended, failed of their power to charm. The lion of the Bombay Corporation found that a mightier lion than himself had been aroused in Bengal,—the people.

For ourselves, what have we to reckon as lost or gained? No strongly worded resolutions have been pressed and we are glad that none have been passed, for we believe in strong action and not in strong words. But our hopes have been realized, our contentions recognized if not always precisely in the form we desired or with as much clearness and precision as we ourselves would have used, yet definitely enough for all practical purposes. The Congress has declared Self-Government on Colonial lines to be its demand from the British Government and this is only a somewhat meaningless paraphrase of autonomy or complete self-government. The Congress has recognized the legitimacy of the Boycott movement as practical in Bengal without limitation or reservation and in such terms that any other province which feels itself called upon to resort to this weapon in order to vindicate its rights, need not hesitate to take it up. The Congress has recognized the Swadeshi movement in its entirety including the adoption of a system of self-protection by the people; within the

scope of its resolution it has found room for the idea of self-help, the principle of self-sacrifice and the policy of the gradual exclusion of foreign goods. The Congress has recognized the necessity of National Education. The Congress has recognized the necessity of a Constitution and adopted one as a tentative measure for a year, which, crude, meagre and imperfect as it is, depends only on our own efforts to develop by degrees into a working constitution worthy of a national assembly. All that the forward party has fought for, has in substance been conceded, except only the practice of recommending certain measures which depend on the Government for their realization; but this was not a reform on which we laid any stress for this particular session. We were prepared to give the old weakness of the Congress plenty of time to die out if we could get realities recognized. Only in one particular have we been disappointed and that is the President's address. But even here the closing address with which Mr. Naoroji dissolved the Congress, has made amends for the deficiencies of his opening speech. He once more declared Self-Government, *Swaraj*, as in an inspired moment he termed it, to be our one ideal and called upon the young men to achieve it. The work of the older men had been done in preparing a generation which were determined to have this great ideal and nothing less; the work of making the ideal a reality, lies with us. We accept Mr. Naoroji's call and to carry out his last injunctions will devote our lives and, if necessary, sacrifice them.

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## MESSAGE ON THE FIFTEENTH OF AUGUST, 1947

SRI AUROBINDO

### NOT FORTUITOUS

August 15th is my own birthday and it is naturally gratifying to me that it should have assumed this vast significance. I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work with which I began life, the beginning of its full fruition. Indeed, on this day I can watch almost all the world-movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my life-time, though then they looked like impracticable dreams, arriving at fruition or on their way to achievement. In all these movements free India may well play a large part and take a leading position.

The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India, India today is free but she has not achieved unity. At one moment it almost seemed as if in the very act of liberation she would fall back into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. But fortunately it now seems probable that this danger will be averted and a large and powerful though not yet a complete union will be established. Also the wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly has made it probable that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindus and Muslims seems now to have hardened

into a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped thht this settled fact will not be accepted as settled for ever or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled : civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest, India's internal development and prosperity may be impeded, her position among the nations weakened, her destiny impaired or even frustrated. This must not be; the partition must go. Let us hope that that may come about naturally, by an increasing recognition of the necessity not only of peace and concord but of common action, by the practice of common action and the creation of means for that purpose. In this way unity may finally come about under whatever form—the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, in whatever way, the division must go; unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future.

Another dream was for the resurgence and liberation of the peoples of Asia and her return to her great role in the progress of human civilisation. Asia has arisen; large parts are now quite free or are at this moment being liberated : its other still subject or partly subject parts are moving through whatever struggles towards freedom. Only a little has to be done and that will be done today or tomorrow. There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which already indicate the measure of her possibilities and the place she can take in the council of the nations.

## WORLD UNION

The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way: there is an imperfect initiation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and it must inevitability increase and conquer. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification

is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement. Its necessity for the nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril of the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure. The unification is therefore to the interests of all, and only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can pervert it; but these cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. But an outward basis is not enough; there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear, perhaps such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy and would no longer find these things incompatible with self-preservation and the integrality of its outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

Another dream, the spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

## FINAL DREAM

The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society. This is still a personal hope and an idea, an ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.

Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation; whether or how far this hope will be justified depends upon the new and free India.

# PART II

# 49

## SCIENCE AND AUROBINDO

S. LOKANATHAN

Claude Alvares has made a formidable attack on the philosophy and cult of Sri Aurobindo in his essay in *Quest* 93. I am not a follower of Aurobindo and I certainly are not in a position to take issue with Alvares on matters of philosophy. However, not content with mere criticism, Alvares appears anxious to demolish the Aurobindo not altogether and he invokes 'science'. The phrases flow freely—the theories of relativity and quanta, Goedel's theorem, the evolutionary process, the second law of thermodynamics and, last buy by no means least, entropy. He argues that these 'are some of the major difficulties *his* philosophy must face.' (Italics mine). Yes, indeed. Any sentemporary philosophy, surely, must be confronted with these developments if it arises issues connected with them. But where, precisely, is the confrontation ? I find Alvares's rebuttal as remote from these scientific principles as Aurobindo's philosophy itself.

Take, for example, the law of entropy. Alvares states it correctly that 'in any transformation of energy from one form to another in a closed system, the entropy of the system tends to increase'. (I might have been less cautious and asserted that it *does* increase). From this, it seems to be, to Alvares, an easy transition to the assertion that a human being cannot evade the basic law of entropy, that this is what absolutist philosophical theories attempt to say and hence they are all quite wrong.

There are great difficulties in extending, meaningfully, the

notion of entropy to biological systems. First, they are not closed systems. Secondly, it is not easy to define, measurably, entropy changes in biological systems. In physics, one is quite clear about the entropy at least of simple systems. Thus, one could calculate the difference in the entropies of two states of a substance at different temperatures and pressures. In the biological context, I am not sure if it is legitimate to talk of, say, the increase of entropy of a human being as he grows older. Or, to take a grand entropical view of the evolution of the human species, what would you say is the change in the entropy of an average human being from 50 thousand years ago to the present ? In fact, many physicists would argue that the process of natural selection and evolution implies a greater ordered system and the modern man, therefore, has a lower entropy. Again, the process of reproduction of life from an ordered arrangement of organic matter to a precise replica out of a myriad other possible arrangements, is the very opposite of a drift towards more randomness. To dismiss these difficulties with a mere assertion that 'mankind and history must one day find an end, if the law of entropy follows its rigorous course' is a curious addiction to a new religion. The author, on the same page (p. 22) says : 'What we should guard against is our perpetual tendency to universalise the validity of our experiences and to permit our imaginations to run away with the evidence.' Obviously the law of entropy is exempt from this injunction ! Alvares poses and dismisses questions which, apparently, are a non-starter thanks to entropy. Are there any permanent values ? Is the Indian philosophy of rebirth (to which the author says Aurobindo gave impetus) possible ? Can there be a pure existence—enternal, infinite, indefinable, not affected by the extension of time ? All these, it seems, violate entropy.

Relativity and the concept of space-time, apparently, further bolster these conclusions. It is remarkable that Einstein's theory has a sort of queer fascination for philosophers that few scientific theories have. One of the major sources of this fascination, one suspects, is simply the word 'relativity', since much of the so-called philosophical consequences stem from a mere play on this word. For example, to quote Alvares :

> As consciousnesses differ, time differs and no two things are therefore identical. For the circumstances differ with each

individual as each one lives in his own specific time and is a combination of unique factors not available to anyone else in the unpredictable conspiracy of heredity and environment. Even twins, we must admit, are born one after the other.

The implication is that all this is obvious because Einstein said that time is not quite the same for different observers. There emerge, from this, further remarkable conclusions and the arguments proceed thus. Each one has his own time since every individual 'is a concentration on historical time'. Hence—and this is the punch line—timeless logic is impossible.

Let us try this syllogism by replacing 'time' with 'space', a permissible exercise after Einstein, apparently. The argument follows with practically no changes and the conclusion is that spaceless logic is impossible. *Ergo*, each one has his own observations, deductions, mathematics and science. Perhaps the laws of nature ard themselves different for everyone in different parts of the world and at different times.

Now herein lies the trouble with this kind of play on words. In fact, Einstein said the very opposite. His statement was that there exists a class of observers (in uniform motion with respect to each other) for whom the laws *are* the same. However, the purpose is not to demonstrate that Einstein's theory either proves or disproves Aurobindo's philosophy. It simply has nothing to do with it. For all that, you might be well confront Aurobindo's ideas with earlier theories. Alvares implies that they are in fact consistent with Newton's concepts and somehow the arrival of Einstein had put paid to the philosophy. I can see nothing so specific in the confrontation except the play on words like 'absolute time', 'absolute space', and so on.

There are, we are told, further grand fruits of the theory of relativity and the loss of entropy. (Few physicists have yet had the courage to attempt a unification of these grand principles.) To Alvares the contradict the concept of eternity and—this is something he wishes us to conclude is an obvious corollary—the notion of an infinite mind ! The last I read of a similar attempt was of Euler trying to prove the existence of God by writing down an equation. Obviously, mathematics and science are equally viable tools for both sides !

What one finds most disturbing in Alvares's faith in the new

science is his view that somehow the whole thing *must* be. What other construction can one put on his remark that 'the theory of relativity is not epistemological theory formulated for the purpose of natural philosophy—it is the most perfect representation of external reality to us' ? So that is it. Ultimately, it is not experiment at all—it is the beauty of the thing. I wonder that after this, Alvares dares blame Aurobindo or anyone else for his own vision of beauty.

Let it be admitted, however, that Alvares may be right in claiming that there is nothing that stays the same for eternity. It is simply longer than a certain time for which they have verifiable conclusion. Within this limited eternity, one can cite measurable quantities which physicists believe *are* constant in time, in the universe-energy, momentum, charge, angular momentum, and so on. It is not my intention to appeal to technical jargon to bolster the argument. All that I wish is to caution against the idea of entropy or relativity to demolish anything permanent, particularly abstractions such as values, morals and God, which physicists do not pretend to understand anyway. 'Excruciating gibberish'—and I must agree wholeheartedly that this is how some of the quoted passages of Aurobindo's writings read to me—does not require this kind of analysis. In fact, Alvares's is a kind of pseudo-scientific extrapolation that has always frightened practising scientists from expounding their theories in intelligible language to the philosophers.

# 50

## AUROBINDO AND SCIENCE

CLAUDE ALVARES

Having launched 'a formidable attack on the philosophy and cult of Sri Aurobindo', I am now being called on to unloose a fresh barrage on another cult : the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Scientific Ideas, to which Dr. Lokanathan claims to belong. Admittedly, such a Society did once exist, but today a healthier attitude exists between philosophers and scientists. Happily I can note that the really great scientists of our time have not been 'frieghtented to explain their ideas to laymen such as of Einstein himself (with Infeld) wrote a beautiful introduction to the New Physics, *The Evolution of Physics.* And Heisenberg, Shroedinger, Monod, Dobzhansky, *et al.* have all taken much time out to share their ideas with non-scientists. The mighty attitude that Dr. Lokanathan assumes is typical of scientists who have not made any significant contribution to science but who have, on the contrary, been always eager to cash in on the prestige of the discipline.

I gather, in the first place, that Dr. Lokanathan's reading of Aurobindo is scanty. That he is certain that scientific principles are quite remote from Aurobindo's philosophy itself. Perhaps Dr. Lokanathan is unsure that Aurobindo attracts considerable interest today precisely because the promises to pay attention to the world and its evolution through time. Leave out evolution from the Aurobindovian philosophical system and you realize immediately that the Pondicherry sage has not really progressed anywhere

beyond the venerable Shankara. Perhaps the fault is mine : the article published is a fragment of a larger volume that I am completing on the philosopher : the major section of the book in fact deals with evolution and Aurobindo. The present article therefore says very little about what could constitute a comprehensive review of the subject.

But let us proceed to Dr. Lokanathan's discussion of the scientific elements of my piece : perhaps by the time we end we might even understand why the teaching of science, especially physics, fares so dismally in our universities.

Dr. Lokanathan reproves me mildly at the start for writing that 'in any transformation of energy from one form to another in a closed system, the entropy of the system tends to increase'. In fact, he says, *he* would have been less cautious and asserted that entropy *does* increase. Two things here : first, Dr. Lokanathan literally multilates the original sentence, for in the text I *continue*, 'i.e., it may increase (and it in fact generally does so) or it may remain unchanged.' Secondly, and here I must question Dr. Lokanathan's very competence as a scientist, I used the word *tends* for a specific purpose. I give two examples to explain the reason. Dr Lokanathan could check them up in *Advances in Protein Chemistry*, Vol. XIV. The scientist is W. Kauzimann. I got them from Sir Peter Medawar, a 1960 Nobel Laureate in medicine. Says the latter :

> The crystallization of tobacco mosaic virus is accompanied by a slight *decrease* in the temperature of the solution from which it forms. A rise would have been expected, because the gain in order by the virus must be paid for by a gain of entropy elsewhere. How is this to be explained ? 'The explanation is that the hydrophobic surfaces of the virus sub-units induce order in the water in which they move. When the units aggregate, the hydrophobic surfaces are in the interior of the virus, out of contact with water. The solvent thus becomes more disorganized, and this outweighs the order created in the virus.' A cognate phenomenon is the reversible aggregation and disassociation of the subunits of certain 'cold-sensitive' enzymes, a matter of some importance for the control of metabolic processes within the cell. Pyruvic carboxylase is built of four similar subunits. On *cooling* to about

4 degrees C the tetrad dissociates into subunits and enzymatic activity is lost. There must therefore be a compensating increase of orderliness in the ambient fluid.

In such situations a scientist would certainly be more cautious and would indeed use the word 'tends'.

But let me go on to the next issue : entropy and biological systems. I *know* that no attempt to reveal a formal equivalence of the ideas of biological organization and thermodynamic order has succeeded. I would therefore be foolish to attempt such a construction myself. I am also aware that living systems are thermodynamically open systems. But I am also certain that *no* scientist to date has ever held that the overall transformations of matter and energy with the biological system as a whole can ever contravene the Second Law. Even the two examples I have cited above for Dr. Lokanathan's education have only convinced biologists that even if biological systems may sometimes disobey the spirit of the Second Law, they are eventually constrained to follow its letter.

What I would do here is to ask Dr. Lokanathan to pick up a book, written way back in 1925, by A.J. Lotka and called *The Elements of Physical Biology.* Lotka in that volume regarded evolution as the change undergone by the *total* system, organism+environment, conceived as an isolated system (or rather as a closed system with a known input of radiant energy). Conceived thus, the evolving system certainly obeys the Second Law. As far as I am aware, Lotka's model is accepted as valid more than ever today by front-rank biologists. Indeed, Lotka's conception shows ingeniously what might happen when the environment undergoes drastic change and the inflow of energy is cut off : species become extinct.

Of course, man through culture is no longer restricted to the exploitation of a specific ecological niche. In fact, culture enables him to remain instinctually nebulous. Yet even the phenomenon of man is absolutely qualified by its restriction by the Second Law, for man still depends on energy and the source of this is the sun. The sun unlike the universe, is slated to die a 'her death', and in this sense the statement that 'mankind and histosy must one day find an end' is merely declaring the obvious. Certainly, the time is far distant when such an event will have come to pass, but its inevitability must have some consequences on our understanding

of human life in general whether considered individually or as the species. Ecologists have been warning us of the possibility of another Ice Age. Conceivably, we might all find ourselves reincarnated as icicles.

Dr. Lokanathan then proceeds to quote me on the individuation of consciousness. Amazingly, he then goes on to draw the opposite conclusion : that a timeless logic is impossible ! He should go back to grammar school. For, what I've been trying to demonstrate is exactly how the timeless quality of logic and mathematics is acquired. Para two on page 19 of my article *begins* : 'How is a timeless logic possible ? Simply, by eliminating all temporal and historical considerations from the perspective of thoughts I have been brought up to respect the precision with which physicists work. A physicist like Dr. Lokanathan who can manage to read the opposite of what has been explicitly written is obviously in the wrong career. And what's more, he is the Head of the Department ! Well, the Peter Principle really works !

I thought such an attitude was more appropriate to a physicist who has spent the greater portion of his active life in science. For myself, I am more than necessarily aware of the grave conceptual and operational inadequacies of science. If the contingency of man has been a recurrent theme in my article, I would not be asking too much of the reader to apply the same qualification to man's constructions, whether these belong to Sir Karl Popper's Third World or the much earlier Platonic World of Ideas.

In fact, in a recent conversation which I had with Professor Jacques Monod in Paris, I asked him whether all the activities of our present-day scientists (and, as Malraux would say; of Western man in general) were not intended as a frantic legitimation of a situation that precluded them from considering the legitimation of life itself. I was curious to discover whether Monod had succumbed to the new overpowering myth of science as the new God dispensing frames of immortality to all those who have been clever enough to add footnotes to its intellectual empire. The question precisely was would man's intellectual creations survive his temporality. Monod replied : I would still believe that prime-numbers would continue to exist.

I am not so sure. And when I consider that the contents of values for example are more mutable than those of numbers (if the latter can be said to be mutable in any sense) then I find it very

tedious to discuss the permanence of values. I am not so sure that through the various histories of mankind the permanency of values has not been invoked to cloak terrible injustices. The ultimate value is that every man be given the opportunity to create his own. And since all men are reasonable, we could eventually agree on those that preserve a healthy society. If I abhor *karma* it is because for centuries it has allowed the privileged to enjoy themselves and kept the poor feeding on the crumbs. Like Lewis Mumford, I would very much prefer the attitude of Arjuna in the *Gita*, a man who fought because he had to : the answers of Krishna seem now as so many flabby excuses. No amount of reasons can convince a man to carry on, that at least Ortega y Gasset perceived. What is surprising is that we are forgetting this lesson we learnt centuries ago, just as the West is now discovering its strict wisdom.

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## AUROBINDO'S YOGA-POLITICS

Niranjan Dhar

Yoga is an ancient system of Indian thought. It had its origin in the magico-religious belief of the primitive people that indulging in certain practices and uttering certain words gave man supernatural powers. These psycho-physical exercises then became the floating possessions of a number of heterogenous sects. Brahminism too absorbed a good deal of this tradition. Patanjali in his *Yogasutra* tried for the first time to collect and synthesise these practices in the section called 'bihhutipada'. Although *bibhuti* or the acquisition of supernatural powers was, as usual, taken to be the direct result of the practice of yoga, *kaivalya* or salvation was also proclaimed to be attained through it.

With the Muslim domination of the country we find *Yoga* invading the political field. Some ardent freedom fighters of that age sought to utilise *yoga* to acquire supernatural powers for achieving their national purpose. Thus Rana Pratap, Pratapaditya, Sivaji, Chand Roy and some others were worshippers of *sakti* and disciples of Tantric yogis. The new trend contained among a group of politicians even into the modern period, Muslim domination being now replaced by the British. Aurobindo Ghose was the prominent among them.

Dr. K.D. Ghose, father of Aurobindo, wanted that his son should qualify for the I.C.S. and "glorify his country by a brilliant administration." Aurobindo, however, failed to compete not because of lack of intellectual ability. He passed the I.C.S.

examination quite creditably. But he could not pass the physical test prescribed. For his failure the other was very diseased with him and stopped further remitances to him. Aurobindo was forced return to India. In 1983, he came to Baroda and became an Private Secretary of the Gaekwad and then joined in the freedom movement.

In the freedom struggle we were pitted against not only a 20th century machinery but also against 20th century minds. The weakness of the Indian revolutionary forces was not so much the absence of material and physical instruments as the absence of modern minds. What was needed was to create, in Roy's words, 'a brains-trust of the Indian revolution.' There was no lack of modern minds but most of them were enlisted in the service of other camp. The defection of some of them was a necessary precondition of the creation of a brans-trust for the Indian revolution. By joining the ranks of the nationalist forces Aurobindo certainly strengthened them but ultimately, as we shall see, he proved to be a great liability because of his extreme religious predilections.

At Baroda, Aurobindo began his political career as a severe critic of the moderate politics of the Indian National Congress. But his politics only served as a cover for organising a secret revolutionary movement. We know that immediately after he failed in the I.C.S. examination he turned to politics with a vengeance while still in England. He got himself admitted into the Cambridge where the Indians had a debating society, the Cambridge Majlis. He made strong speeches there and the idea of terrorist activity occurred to him then. Parnill, the revolutionary leader of the Irish Home Rule Movement, inspired him, and he established a secret society of Indians named 'Lotus and Dagger' to free India by armed rebellion.

During the last decade of the 19th century secret societies sprang up in Bengal and the Bombay region of Western India on the model of those European countries. According to the Sedition Committee Report, the Sarvajanin Ganapati and Sivaji Festivals first introduced in 1895 and the murder of Rand in 1896 marked the beginning of the terrorist movement in the Bombay region. The study of Greek history and Olympic games gave Tilak the idea of organising Ganapati Festivals and the principles of hero worship that Tilak imbibed from the study of Carlyle and Emerson

revolutionary action. He then returned to Baroda with his brother. Thus, ended the first part of Aurobindo's secret society movement.

Debabrata Basu, a Brahmo co-cospirator of Aurobindo, now advised the latter to work for the freedom of the country by some super-natural means because, according to Basu, whatever might have happened in other countries, the revolutionary means would not work in a deeply religious country like India. This advice found ready response in Aurobindo.

Aurobindo, of course, had felt attracted to *yoga* even before that. He came of a devout Brahmo family, and his education started in a convent school. In England he was placed in-charge of a clergyman named Druette. The religious influence upon him was therefore very strong from his early life. Aurobindo's attention was then drawn towards Yoga by 1903 when Nivedita presented him with a copy of Vivekananda's *Rajayoga.* It influenced him profoundly. He was then found wandering on the banks of the Narmada in search of sadhus. At Chando on the bank of the Narmada lived a famous yogi named Brahmananda. He was the guru of Swami Balananda, the well-known hatha-yogi of Deoghar. Aurobindo used to visit Deoghar where his maternal grandfather, Rajnarain Bose, was leading a retired life. Aurobindo must have heard of Brahmananda there. In 1903, he went to see him from Baroda with two of his friends, Deshpande and Dhurandhar. On reaching the hermitage of Brahmananda, Dhurandhar fell ill. Brahmananda thereupon asked one of his disciples Keshabananda to bring some water from the Narmada and gave it to Dhurandhar who drank the water and, reportedly, soon got well. Brahmananda kept staring at Aurobindo for sometime, and according to Barin, it was "the first real touch which was destined in time to open Aurobindo's being to Higher Truths." The attraction, however, which he now felt for yoga was only for his personal salvation. He had no idea of deriving any political benefit from it. Then Debabrata Basu's suggestion opened Aurobindo's eyes to the political "potentialities" of yoga. This was amply reflected in the second phase of his underground movement. In the first phase the only religious influence betrayed by him was the introduction of the *Gita* for swearing in new recruits. In the second phase, he went much farther.

With the Partition of Bengal started the second phase of

Aurobindo's secret revolutionary movement (1906-1908). The Partition of 1905 created tremendous awakening in Bengal, and he found the time opportune for resuming his underground activities. He resigned from his Baroda post and shifted to Bengal. Before leaving Baroda, Mother Bhabani, the war-goddess of Sivaji, kindled poetic imagination in Aurobindo, as is evident from the poem 'Baji Prabhon' he wrote at the time, and from his subsequent booklet 'Bhabani Mandir'. On the eve of his departure from Baroda he sent some copies of the booklet to Bengal. He thought Mother Bhabani was the presiding deity of India and would protect and help the band of youngmen to be engaged in committing dacoities and secret murders. He asked the people to rely on God for their political salvation because nationalists had no physical strength which the Government could not crush. At the direction of Aurobindo his brother Barin event went about in search of a plot of land at the Kainoor hill on the bank of the river. Some to build a temple for Bhabani. Aurobindo indicated a place which he considered ideal for the purpose in these words : "far from the contamination of modern cities, and as yet little trodden by man, in a high and pure air steeped in calm and energy." At his Baroda house he had also a golden image of Bagala Devi constructed and worshipped by a Tantric Brahmin at the advice of another ash-smeared yogi "with long and tawny matted locks." This yogi often used to visit Aurobindo at the time. We know that Bagalamukhi was believed to be one of the ten Mahavidyas of the Tantra and her worship was performed only to kill an enemy. As is clear from the letter he wrote to his wife on 30 August 1905, the enemy Aurobindo had in mind was the 'Rakshasa' who had been sucking the blood of his motherland. By this time he also practised yoga for acquiring supernatural powers.

Next year in 1906 when Aurobindo came to settle in Bengal the Marathi Bhabani and the Tantric Bagala were transformed into the Bengali Kali. In fact, from now on he signed his name as 'Kali'. The reason he explained thus : "Those who are commissioned to bring about mighty changes are full of the force of Kali. Kali has entered into them" (*Karmayogin*, p. 74). At a later stage, the concept of Sakti or Divine Mother transcended the national limit and grew into Mahasakti, the mother of the whole world. The four forms of the World-Mother—Maheswari,

Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati—now appeared in his vision. The next stage began when Aurobindo grew more mystic and the Divine Mother became unified with the universe. We get a clear indication of it in his *Ahana* and in some of his poems written at the time in the Greek metres. The perversity of an able mind could not go further.

Aurobindo's yoga sudhana, however, made rapid progress only after he became acquainted with Vishnu Bhaskar Lele. Lele was a Marathi Brahmin of Gwalior, not a sanyasi but a house-holder yogi. He was an old acquaintance of Barindara at whose instruction he met Aurobindo at Baroda towards the end of 1907 after the Congress split at Surat. Lele heightened the spiritual spell already cast upon Aurobindo and inducted him into *yoga sadhana* proper.

Lele, however, did not support underground activities. By 1908, the Bengal Partition movement was almost a spent force. The secret societies failed to attract new recruits. To whip up the flagging enthusiasm of young people Barin hit upon a novel plan. He invited Lele to Calcutta to make a show of his supernutural powers and to instil new confidence in the young people. On coming to Calcutta and seeing the bomb factory of Manicktola, Lele completely disapproved the secret politics. He favoured a bloodless revolution and suggested yoga was the surest means of winning freedom for the country. Lele and Debabrata thus pointed in the same direction.

Aurobindo's own jail-experiences finally contributed to his complete metamorphosis. The murder of two innocent English women, Mrs. and Miss Kennedy, by two of Aurobindo's young camp-followers, at once put the authorities on alert. There were wide-spread search and arrests. The leader was also rounded up. He remained clamped in the Alipore Central Jail as an under-trial prisoner for one year from 5 May, 1908 to 6 May, 1909. The charges against him being not substantiated in a court of law, he was released.

In the jail he had strange experiences. But after his acquittal Aurobindo gave an account of those experiences in the very first speech he delivered at the *Dharmarakshini Sabha* of Uttarpara. God placed the *Gita* in his hand, and His "strength" entered into him. He was then "able to do the *sadhana* of the Gita." From now on he began to see God everywhere. The prison-walls,

the tree in front of his cell and the jail-sentry—all appeared as Vasudeva Srikrishna. Then God said to him: "This is the Sanatana Dharma, this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you." This realisation of "the utter truth to the Hindu Religion" wrought a complete change in Aurobindo, and henceforward he became a mere instrument of God's will. He concluded his speech by saying: "This is the word that has been put into my mouth to speak to you today; what I intended to speak has been put away from me, and beyond what is given to me I have nothing to say. . . What I speak is under an impulse or a compulsion."

Aurobindo came out of jail with the divine behest to preach the Sanatan Dharma. The freedom of the country became only a means to that end. The freedom movement was thus primarily a religious movement and only secondarily a political one. Indians should rise again "not for themselves" but "for the Sanatana Dharma" and the world. Swaraja became identical with Swadharma.

This post-imprisonment position of Aurobindo was, however, quite contrary to his previous position when he contended that nationalism was our religion. At a meeting in Bombay he said: Nationalism is immortal, Nationalism cannot die, because it is no human being, it is God who is working in Bengal. God cannot be killed. God cannot be sent to prison." Under the new situation, however, (Hindu) religion was proclaimed as nationalism. "I say no longer", said Aurobindo at Uttarpara, that Nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith, I say that it is the Sanatana Dharma which, for it, is Nationalism." The politics he practised so far was European, while the yogic way was the Indian way.

This radical change in outlook was also reflected in the journal which he published after his release from jail. Before he went to jail, he used to publish a journal entitled *Bande Mataram.* It was out and out political. After coming out of jail he was requested to resume its publication but he refused. Instead he started the new journal *Karmagogin.* Its very name betrayed influence of the *Gita* upon him. A year or so after he published another journal called *Dharma.*

The Pondicherry Ashram was conceived by him in the Alipore jail. The immediate reason which led Aurobindo to Chandannagar and then to Pondicherry was probably to avoid arrest which

seemed imminent after the murder of Moulavie Samsul Khan, Deputy Superintendent of Police. But there is no gainsaying that Pondicherry was the logical culmination of his jail experiences, and the need to avoid police arrest had only hastened his retreat into spiritual life. In the words of Aurobindo himself, "I did not leave politics because I felt I could do nothing more there; such an idea was very far from me. I came away because I did not want anything to interefere with my yoga and because I got a very distinct '*adesha*' in the matter."

At Pondicherry Aurobindo devoted himself wholly to yoga, and a small religious community began to develop around him. He loved secrecy. From one secret movement he plunged into another. Two of Aurobindo's prominent lieutenants in the underground movement, Jatin Banerjee and Debrata Basu, also took to the path of yoga for achieving the freedom of the country. They became famous under the assumed names of Niralamba Swami and Prajnananda respectively. Curiously enough, Bepin Pal, another political leader closely allied with Aurobindo in the extremist Congress politics, received in the Buxar jail in *adesha* similar to that obtained by the latter in the Alipore jail. He along with Satish Mukherji, also a co-worker of Aurobindo in his Congress, became disciples of Bijoy Goswami, the famous yogi, who is supposed to have instilled strength in them. The Ramakrishna Mission too provided refuge to some revolutionaries. Nalini Kishore Guha hss given a list of as many as sixteen famous revolutionaries who became yogis. Besides these, there was a host of others belonging to the rank and file who went the yogic way, as we see from Aurobindo's description of his prison life in his *Karakahini*.

This yoga-politics is not just the idiosyncrasy of one or two indviduals. It has grown out of the cultural backwardness of the Indian society.

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## SRI AUROBINDO : PROPHET OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

R.D. SINHA DINKAR

The year Shri Aurobindo was born, Rimbaud published his Illuminations. But that is irrelevant. What is relevant is that the year when Shri Aurobindo returned from England was also the year when Vivekananda sailed for the United States and the day when Shri Aurobindo was born, became after 75 years, of course, the day of India's Independence. And the centenary year of Shri Aurobindo's birth has coincided with the Silver Jubilee celebration of our Independence.

In India, Nationalism began as a cultural movement, the first emphasis being laid on a relentless opposition to the cultural influence of the West rather than to the rule or misrule of the rulers. Before trying to free her body from the chains of slavery, India grew anxious to save here soul. And that was natural, for although the Indians were mostly unmindful of military victories and defeats, they were quite sensitive to what was happening to their cultural and spiritual heritage. What havoc the western influence had begun to play with our culture, has best been described by Shri Aurobindo himself. Not merely Bengal but the whole of India "was drunk with the wine of European Civilisation and with the purely intellectual teaching it received from the West. It began to see all things, to judge all things through the imperfect instrumentality of the intellect. When it was so, Bengal (and the rest of India also, let us add) became atheistic, it became a land

of doubters and cynics." What was worse, the England-returned gentleman became a ridiculous perversion of his European contemporary, as Radhakrishnan has put it. "His voice became an echo," he says, "his life a quotation, his soul a brain and his free spirit a slave to the things." No wonder, the shock to the masses was so great that they began to doubt every aspect of modernity, lest the shining gold should conceal some base metals, some abominable things which had revealed themselves in the conduct of many people who had received western education and pretended to be modern and advanced. The shock was so deep and tremendous that the country has not recovered from its evil effects to this day. The wound went too deep in its subconscious mind with the result that even now the masses are a little cold when faced with a modern idea or things.

The sub-conscious of the Indian masses is saturated with spiritual idealism; and, although the masses are in misery, they have an innate feeling of resistence to communism, though it is well known that communists never betray the poor. But the big question is, why are they atheists.

This is background against which the character of Indian Nationalism should be judged and seen. This is the reason why Shri Aurobindo, who was destined to make his mark as a poet, a philosopher and a Yogi par excellence, was temporarily drawn to politics and journalism. This also explains why it is difficult to decide whether Gandhi, who ultimately became the liberator of India, was a politician or a saint. This is a lesson for the writers and commentators of the world who want to understand India with the same vision with which they see, analyse and judge the countries of the west. This is also a warning to the present and future rulers of India. If they play havoc with the cherished ideals of the Indian people, the latter too will play havoc with them and if they try to destroy the eternal values that India has preserved and protected even in her worst day, the people will not hesitate to destroy them. We should always bear in mind that India is an indefinable as her Hinduism.

## BATTLE FOR SAVING CULTURE TRANSFORMED INTO A POLITICAL MOVEMENT

India had survived the onslaughts of innumerable races and

cultures as well as the cultural inroad of the West. Our first National Movement was not a terrorist movement, not even was thus the Congress movement, but the movements were generated by the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj. Our first leaders too were neither Tilak nor Gandhi, nor Jawaharlal. They were Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Paramahans Rama Krishna, Swami Dayanand and Swami Vivekananda, who fought hard with their mighty mind and soul to save the spirit of India. And it must be said to their credit that they won the battle. Go to any other country in the world, in most places, you will find the past completely defeated at the hands of the present. Only in India it has been giving a vigorous fight. Modernism is having a hard time in India, for she is not willing to assimilate the elements which do not suit her genius. Modernism is not an unmixed blessing. It will have to be rid of many of its drawbacks before India accepts it whole-heartedly. And when it is acceptable to India, only then will it be acceptable to and a real boon for all mankind.

When India was fighting her cultural battle and had almost touched the peak point of victory, a national movement in its political form was born in the country. But it was much too tame. The Congress of those days was dominated by moderate leaders who did not want to displease the British Government altogether and thus invite risk to their security and position. They believed in petitioning to the Government "for crumbs of constitutional reform" and felt honoured when the Governors or or the Viceroy invited them to dinners or to the periodic Durbars. There were exceptions too, such as Lokmanya Tilak, the tallest man of his time. Their opinions however, did not prevail. The country's sub-conscious was see-thing with fervour and discontent. But the nation lacked a genius who could fathom and express it, and inflame it.

Then appeared on the Indian scene a pious colossus, pure in character, possessed of the highest intellect that men had ever seen, burning with passion to change the complexion of Congress politics and unlock the door behind which unseen but mighty enthusiasm was pulsating in the people.

## A STRANGER TO HIS OWN LAND DAWNS

This was Shri Aurobindo, the son of Dr. K.D. Ghose, a

perfectly anglicised Indian gentleman, who hated his own country and considered Europe to be far, far superior to his own wretched land of birth. Dr. K.D. Ghose did not intend his sons "to be in the least contaminated by the smoky and retrograde mysticism in which his country was running to waste." He did not even want them to know anything of the traditions and languages of India. Till the age of 20 Shri Aurobindo did not know any Indian language. He began to learn Bengali, Sanskrit and Hindi after he came back from England in 1893 and settled in Baroda. Before he read the Bhagwat Gita in translation, he had read Baudelaire, Mallerame and Rimbaud in original French, and many more masters in English, French, German, Indian and Greek languages.

Shri Aurobindo had been intended and reared to be a complete un-Indian. But the turned an Indian with a vengeance. He was intended to be untouched by the corrupting influence of mysticism, but he grew to be a mystic of the highest order.

Does not Tagore's view point, illustrated in the GORA, sound a little incongruous here that a man becomes what he is reared to be ? Or are we here somewhere near the truth that even a tamarind tree may bear a mango fruit if God wills it ?

Shri Aurobindo used to say that Nationalism was not a political movement. It was our religion, our Dharma. He also believed National movements are led by God and that whenever a leader appears, it is HE who appoints him.

To a rationalist this will sound curious and the principle may not very well apply to all movements and leaders of Nationalism. But this applies well in the case of Shri Aurobindo, for he was not made for politics but for something much higher. Yet God led him, as it were, to active politics for a brief spell of five years and then withdrew him into solitude again. Yet during that short period Shri Aurobindo, uttered things which had not been uttered before, churned the Indian mind as it had never been churned through the centuries and set the pace for India's freedom movement in the future.

Here one naturally thinks of Gandhiji. Did Gandhiji march along the groove carved by Shri Aurobindo ? Didn't he do things which Shri Aurobindo never even dreamt of ? How far did Shri Aurobindo anticipate Gandhiji ?

## SRI AUROBINDO AND GANDHI

Gandhiji was as much a leader appointed by God as Shri Aurobindo. When Shri Aurobindo made his debut on the national scene as a flaming apostle of extreme nationalism, Gandhiji was not there. He was practising in South Africa precisely what Shri Aurobindo was preaching in Bengal : he was practising passive resistance and challenging the same power in another part of the globe which Aurobindo was challenging in India. But it will be foolish to assume that either of them borrowed each others ideas. But there is no denying the fact that many of the programmes that were launched during the days of the Swadeshi movement were revived by Gandhiji in 1920 and afterwards, and carried forward. Shri Aurobindo had sown the seeds. Under Gandhiji's leadership the seedlings grew into trees, all of enormous size. The old programmes, which received new dimensions, were practised on a truly national scale but received new significations and new forms.

In a letter addressed to his wife, Shri Aurobindo had observed, "I firmly believe that all the qualifications, the genius, the higher learning and education, all the wealth that is given to one, they are all His. That which is needed for the unkeep of the family and that which is an imperative necessity alone, should be kept for personal use, the rest should be given to God, to whom these belong. If I spend all for my own little self, my comforts and my luxuries, I am really a thief." This sounds peculiarly Gandhian and contains an ample measure the seeds of Gandhiji's theory of Trusteeship by which Bapu had laid great hopes, but which nobody has cared to practise—not even the public sector, the dearest darling of the Government.

The boycott of foreign goods occupied a high place on Gandhiji's plan of work for freedom. But what was Swadeshi before, became Khaddar afterwards. National Schools became widespread after 1920, but a few of them had been opened even during the Swadeshi movement days. Shri Aurobindo himself had become the Principal of one such College. But, surely, what Shri Aurobindo had termed as BRAHMATEJ became strict non-violence in Gandhiji's scheme of things.

So far as the ideal of non-violence was concerned, Shri Aurobindo did not believe in it. Nirodbaran in his "Talks with

Shri Aurobindo" has recorded Shri Aurobindo as saying, "My idea was for an open armed revolution in the whole of India. What they did at the time was very childish, things like beating magistrates and so on. Later it turned out into terrorism and decoities which were not at all my idea or intention. We wanted to give battle after the awakening of the race through guerilla warfare as in the Irish Sin Fein. But at the present stage of military conditions, such things are impossible, bound to fail."

It was on this account that Shri Aurobindo advocated the method of passive resistance as an expediency and not as a creed. And in this, it seems credible, Shri Aurobindo anticipated Gandhiji although for Gandhiji's non-violence was a creed, and not an expediency.

Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale was sore with the extreme nationalists and believed that the latter had some hidden purpose in their hearts, perhaps the purpose of violence. When Gokhale, by implication, gave vent to his feelings, Shri Aurobindo made the following curt reply :

"We have told the people that there is a peaceful means of achieving independence in whatever form we aspire to it. We have said that by self help, by passive resistance, we can achieve it. Passive resistance means two things. It means first that in certain matters we shall not co-operate with the Government of this country until it gives us what we consider our rights. Secondly, if we are persecuted, if the plough of repression is passed over us, we shall meet it, not by violence, but by suffering, by passive resistance, by lawful means. We have not said to our young men "When you are repressed, retaliate," we have said "suffer." We are showing the people of this country in passive resistance the only way in which they can satisfy their legitimate aspirations without breaking the law and without resorting to violence."

*It is obvious from the above excerpt that it was Shri Aurobindo who first conceived of non-co-operation and passive resistance as the most effective weapon to fight the British. To call him the prophet of Indian nationalism is, therefore, not much of an exaggeration. This tribute was first paid to Shri Aurobindo by no less a person than C.R. Das when he was defending Aurobindo in the Alipore Bomb case.*

The big difference between the two leaders, however, was that while Gandhiji held fast to non-violence as his creed which

could not be diluted, Shri Aurobindo had no such scruple. When Devadas Gandhi asked Shri Aurobindo what his views about non-violence were, Shri Aurobindo put a counter question, "Suppose, there is an invasion of India by the Afghans, how are you going to meet it with non-violence ? Shri Aurobindo did not like to be mentioned as an apostle of non-violence. When "Homage to Sri Aurobindo," a book by K.S. Aiyanger was brought to his notice, Shri Aurobindo said, "He makes me an apostle of non-violence. The quotation he gives from the statement in court, I don't remember at all, because I made no statement."

He also had his misgivings about the theory of change of heart and thought that what they called the change of heart, was but the result of coercion.

Another point of comparison between the two leaders is that both of them wanted to see God face to face. While Gandhiji has said so either in his Autobiography or elsewhere, Shri Aurobindo makes mention of it in a letter to his wife, "I want to see God face to face, however difficult the journey and however long the way."

I have my doubts if Gandhiji's approach to politics was totally secular. All that we can say is that he treated all religions equally and considered them his own. But Shri Aurobindo was different. He did not conceal that his political ideal was not secular." He used to speak and write openly that God was the leader of the national movement and he wanted the SANATAN DHARMA of India to shine forth and not be dimmed by the clouds of western ideas and plans."

But the Freedom Movement did not ultimately go along the lines envisaged by Tilak, Aurobindo or Gandhi himself. As early as December 1938, Shri Aurobindo had remarked, "India is now going towards European socialism which is dangerous for her, whereas we were trying to evolve the genius of the race along Indian lines. It was the soul of the race that awoke, throwing up very fine personalities. The leaders of the movement were either yogis or disciples of yogis."

## THE BANDE MATRAM

When the partition of Bengal became a fact of law on the

29th September, 1905 Bengal decided to rise as one man to oppose it, to oppose it and to agitate till this black Act was annuled. As the revolutionary fervour of the people rose high, the repressive measures of the Government also increased. Under the national programme of Swadeshi, national education and boycott of foreign goods, a National College was founded in Calcutta and Shri Aurobindo ultimately gave up Baroda for good and joined the post of the Principal, the Bengal National College in August 1906.

In Calcutta, Shri Aurobindo became the real brain behind the Nationalist Party in Bengal. Even more important than that was his association with the BANDE MATARAM, a daily newspaper, published by Shri Bipin Chandra Pal, and it was through its colums that he began to arouse the feelings of nationalism and patriotism in a way the country had not known before. The Bande Mataram became the spearhead of the Nationalist movement in Bengal and, let us add, in the whole of India. "The hand of the master was in it from the very beginning. Its bold attitude, its searching sarcasm and refined witticism were unsurpassed by any journal in the conntry, either Indian or Anglo-Indian. And this was how within a few months "from the tutor of a few students," Shri Aurobindo became "the teacher of a whole nation."

Endowed with Shri Aurobindo's powerful fearless and inspiring pen, the Bande Mataram became the mouth-piece of resurgent India. Besides dealing with contemporary problems, it created a whole generation of new patriots who were destined to fight for the freedom of India and ultimately make her free. The late Dr. Krishna Singh, the 'lion' of Bihar, belonged to this generation of patriots. When asked by me as to why he chose the path of suffering and sacrifice, he said, "it was Aurobindo who made us mad."

It was through the columns of the *Bande Mataram* that Shri Aurobindo very quickly did all that was necessary to awaken, arouse and invigorate an inert nation and make it stand on its feet to fight the war of its own liberation. Shri Srinivas Iyengar has very aptly summarised the many services that Shri Aurobindo rendered to the nation through the columns of this celebrated journal. "Through him the disarmed and emasculated millions spoke with defiance and hope." The Prophet of Renascent India

the Tribune of the people, the Quarter Master General of the Nationalists—these are the diverse powers and personalities of Shri Aurobindo that we glimpse in the Bande Mataram contributions."

As Shri Aurobindo did not publicise himself, the Government were at a loss to discover the person who was exerting this powerful influence through his writings. Ultimately the veil lifted and they came to know it was Shri Aurobindo and nobody else. He was, therefore, arrested in August 1907. But since the charge levelled against him could not be proved, he had to be let off. This prosecution did the country a great good. The name of Shri Aurobindo was "in the twinkling of a second" on the lips of the whole people. "Appreciations, congratulations, exhortations, all sought Shri Aurobindo out from the four corners of the subcontinent." The event was so dramatic and great that it inspired the greatest living poet of India who composed the famous poem :

*"O Aurobindo !*
*Accept the salutation of Rabindra."*

Paying high tributes to Shri Aurobindo, the Indian patriot, of these days wrote, "slaves of ease and security, the butterflies of the hour, look small and pitiable by this side."

## IN THE CONGRESS SPLIT

The year 1907 was also eventful from another point of view. It witnessed a breach in the Congress at Surat. Shri Aurobindo had emerged as the accredited leader of the extreme nationalists and had found a noble and senior soul-brother in Bal Gangadhar Tilak who was the "Generalissimo of the Nationalists" and their Supreme High Command. Tilak and Shri Aurobindo had gone to Surat with a strong contingent to capture the Congress for Nationalist Party. But the moderates too under the leadership of Gokhale and Ras Bihari Ghosh had mustered sufficient strength. The Congress was evenly divided, and the difference between the parties was so wide that the session could not be held. The nationalists, therefore, held a separate conference under the chairmanship of Shri Aurobindo and opposed the election of Ras

Bihari Ghose as president. Shri Ghose had gone to Surat as the President elect of the Congress.

## THE TURN

While Shri Aurobindo was living in Baroda, he had come into contact with one Shri Vishnu Bhaskar Lele who was some sort of a Yogi from Maharashtra. It was from Lele that Shri Aurobindo had taken his initiation in Yoga and was advancing fast in his Sadhana to silence the mind. It is said that wherever he went, competent observers marked the calm that emanated from him and the spiritual height from which his speech descended. In public meetings, "he spoke neither like a professional politician nor like an elder statesman; but rather like an evangelist, a prophet. "Thus in one of the meetings he said, "Nationalism is a religion that has come from God. It is a religion by which we are trying to realise God in the nation, in our fellow countrymen. We are trying to realise Him in the three hundred millions of our people."

One feels as if one were hearing an echo of Vivekananda who was already dead, an echo of Gandhiji who was to make his appearance ten years later.

As the awakening in the people deepened and they clamoured for Swaraj, the Government came down on the people with a heavy hand. The repressive measures adopted by the Government were so severe that the Secretary of State for India was little alarmed and he wrote to the Viceory. "We must keep order, but the excess of severity is not the path to order; on the contrary it is the path to bomb. "And actually more often than not, bombs exploded in the country putting new hopes in the people and instilling fear in the Government.

Ultimately on April 10, 1908, Khudi Ram Bose threw a bomb in Muzaffarpur (Bihar) which killed two innocent English ladies. This enraged the Government beyond all measures and they started arresting young men right and left. As Shri Aurobindo was the brother of Barindra Ghose, a well known terrorist who was found connected with a bomb factory, he too was arrested on May 5, 1908 and lodged in the Alipore Jail where he spent a full year as an under trial prisoner.

The case that was started against Shri Aurobindo and others

is known in history as the "Alipore Bomb Case"—a story that need not be narrated here in detail. The point worth mentioning here is that this jail custody proved to be a boon to Shri Aurobindo as it brought about a complete transformation in him. It is said that Shri Aurobindo saw in the jail a vision of *Vasudeva who assured* him that nothing would happen to him and that he was marked out for some other work higher than politics. But in Nirod Baran's book (Talks with Shri Aurobindo) Shri Aurobindo is reported as saying. "It was *Vivekanand who*, when he used to come to me during meditation in Alipore Jail, showed me the intuitive plane. For a month or so he gave instructions about intuition." In another place in the same book Shri Aurobindo is reported to have said, "it was the spirit of Vivekananda who first gave me a clue in the direction of the supermind."

God had decided to take away Shri Aurobindo from politics.

It was a highly sensational case, an event that made the whole country hold its breath to see what happened to Shri Aurobindo, the hero of the people. The speech of C.R. Das, who defended Shri Aurobindo, spread out for eight days and "was an eloquent epic of forensic art." But the piece that has gone down in history as a prophesy and a solemn utterance of the age, is the one where C.R. Das appealing on behalf of Shri Aurobindo addressed the court on the highest plane that an advocate can seldom find an occasion to reach, He said :

"My appeal to you is this, that long after this turmoil and and agitation will have ceased. Long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of Patriotism; as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone his words will be echoed and re-echoed, not only in India, but across distant seas and lands. Therefore, I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the bar of this court, but before the bar of the High Court of History."

The assessors returned a unanimous verdict of "Not guilty" and Shri Aurobindo was set free some time in May 1909.

When Shri Aurobindo came out of the jail, he was disappointed to find that much of the fervour generated by him was gone and an atmosphere of uneasy silence prevailed in the country. He gave vent to his feelings in his feeling in his

UTTARPARA speech.

"When I went to jail, the whole county was alive with the cry of Bandematram, alive with the hope of a nation, the hope of millions of men who had newly risen out of degradation. When I came aut of jail, I listened for that cry, but there was instead a silence. A hush had fallen on the country and men seemed bewildered,"

Obviously rcpression had succeeded temporary as it often does. Consoling the masses Shri Aurobindo said :

"Repression is nothing but the hammer of God that is beating up into shape so that we may be moulded into a mighty nation and an instrument for His work in the world."

I am reminded here of parallel lines from the SAVITRI where Shri Aurobindo said :

*"Pain is the hammer of Gods to break the dead resistence of the mortals.*
*Pain is the Nature's hand sculpturing man to greatness,*
*An inspired, labour that chisels with heavy cruelty the unwilling mould."*

Coming out of the jail. Shri Aurobindo published the KARAMAYOGIN in English and the DHARMA in Bengali. The main idea was to organise the Nationalist Party again which had all but disintegrated. But the level of the papers could not be continued by the mundane alone. It began to rise to spiritual heights, an indication that the personality of the editor was being pulled in two different directions by politics and Yoga.

He began to think that the social reforms being purchased in the country aimed merely at mechanical changes. Unless there was a change in the spirit, misery and degradation will not end. "It is the spirit alone that saves and only by becoming great and free in heart can we become socially and politically free."

This sounds like a distant preface to what Shri Aurobindo was to say later in the context of the Supramental evolution of men.

In July 1909 a hot rumour spread throughout Calcutta that the Government were fed up with Shri Aurobindo and that they had decided to deport him. Although Shri Aurobindo remained unperturbed, he believed the rumour and began to get ready for

the worst. In this mood he published an "Open letter to my countrymen" in which he used phrases such as "in case of my deportation" and "if I do not return." *This open letter, Shri Aurobindo said, was to stand as his "last political will and testament to his countrymon."*

"All great movements," the letter declared, "wait for their God sent leader who are willing channel of His force : and only when he comes, move forward triumphantly to their fulfilment. Therefore, the Nationalist party, the custodians of the future must wait for the man who is to come."

History has amply demonstrated that Gandhiji was the leader of whom Shri Aurobindo had foresaid. It was a pity that the two leaders could never meet.

In February 1910, Shri Aurobindo left Calcutta and went over to the neighbouring French territory of Chandernagore. It is presumed that Shri Aurobindo might have thought of this stop in order to thwart the evil designs of the Government who were this time determined to take him away from the country for good and lodge him in a cell of the Andamans. And actually when Shri Aurobindo had left Calcutta, the Government started another prosecution againt him. This was the third prosecution launched against Shri Aurobindo, but it also failed.

## THE ASHRAM

Ultimately under the guidance of an "inner voice," an ADESH from above, Shri Aurobindo left Chandranagore and started for Pondicherry, another French possession in India, where he reached on April 4, 1910, and lived there till the end of his life writing poetry and essays and practising yoga.

When Lele had suggested to Shri Aurobindo to take to Yoga. Shri Aurobindo had said, "Politics and Poetry are very dear to me. I can take to Yoga only if it does not interfere with them."

But ultimately Shri Aurobindo sacrificed politics for the sake of Yoga, although he did not give up poetry even then.

Doubts are often raised as to why Shri Aurobindo quit politics. Was it because of the feeling that instead of wasting life in an Andaman cell, it was better to go into solitude and spend it in the pursuit of poetry, philosophy and spiritual things ?

This hypothesis seems to possess some weight no doubt but it is rather a cheap criterion to judge the motives of one who did so much for the world in general and for his country in particular and who left so huge and noble a heritage for all mankind.

Something must have happened to him which convinced him that politics could not be combind with Yoga and that he must give it up to pursue the highest ideals. Shri C.R. Das had visited Shri Aurobindo in Pondicherry once said, "He had come here and wanted to be a disciple. I said, he would not be able to go through in Yoga as long as he was in the political movement."

The same did happen to the late Shri A.B. Purani who had gone to see Shri Aurobindo in December 1918. Shri Purani informed Shri Aurobindo, "Our group is now ready to start revolutionary activity. It has taken us eleven years to go organised.

Shri Aurobindo replied, "Perhaps it may not be necessary to resort to revolutionary activity to free India."

Shri Purani was carrying on some sort of Sadhana. Shri Aurobindo wanted him to concentrate on it and give up politics altogether.

This, however, did not satisfy Puraniji. He said, "Unless India was freed, he could not concentrate. The concentration of my whole being turns towards India's freedom. It is difficult for me to sleep till that is secured."

Sri Aurobindo after a long pause, said, "Suppose an assurance is given to you ?"

*Shri Purani paused for a moment and then said, "If you give the assurance, I can accept it."*

*Shri Aurobindo in a serious tone replied, "Then I give you the assurance that India will be free."*

Earlier, Shri Aurobindo had told Puraniji, "India has already decided to win freedom and so there will certainly be found leaders and men to work for that goal. But all are not called to Yoga. So when you have the call, it is better to concentrate upon it."

I am one of those who are not at all puzzled why Shri Aurobindo gave up politics and took to Yoga.

# 53

## SRI AUROBINDO'S ROLE IN CONGRESS SPLIT 65 YEARS AGO

MANOJ DAS

Sri Aurobindo was disarmingly frank on acknowledging the nation's debt to Curzon. Henry Nevinson, the visiting British Parliamentarian, who interviewed him, wrote :

> "He regarded the partition of Bengal as the greatest blessing that had ever happened to India. No other measure could have stirred national feeling so deeply or roused it so suddenly from the lethargy of previous years.
> "'Since 1830', he said, 'each generation had reduced us more and more to the condition at sheep and fatted calves.'
> "He lamented the long peace, leading to degeneracy and effeminate ways. Under it the ordinary people had sought only after prosperity and material comfort, while the thoughtful men spent their time in aesthetic circles, admiring Shelley and Swinburne, or imitating them.
> "The more English a man was the more he counted himself as successful, and the life-blood of nationality had run thin. But all the torpor and smug contentment had been rudely interrupted by the disguised blessings of Lord Curzon's errors."

No wonder that with the partition of Bengal in the background, the Calcutta Congress of 1906, under the Presidentship

of Dadabhai Naoroji, was obliged to pass for the first time the revolutionary resolutions demanding Swaraj and upholding the movements of swadeshi, boycott and national education.

This was possible because of the untiring effort of Sri Aurobindo, supported by other leaders of the Nationalist group—known also as Extremists—Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Khaparde and Khare.

The leaders of the conservative group known as Moderates—Sir Phirozeshah Mehta, Gokhale and Surendra Nath Bannerji—were all opposed to the resolutions.

Naoroji was at first undecided. But he was, for the time being, won over by the Nationalists and he influenced the dissenters to veer round them to new sprit.

Naturally now the Nationalists were inspired to become properly mobilised and "to Aurobindo" is due the chief credit for the triumphal emergence of the Extremist Party, and the virtual extinction of the Moderate Party which was to follow." (R.C. Majumdar).

This funny verse became very popular at that time :

Repression comes, but reform lingers.
And we linger on the shore,
And the Moderates wither,
And Extremist is more and more !

But the withering away of the Moderates did not come about so soon after all ! They girded up their loins.

The next session of the Congress was scheduled to take place at Nagpur, but they managed to change the venue to Surat, for Surat was still their stronghold.

The extremists smelled a sizable rat in this move of the Moderates and decided to put up a good fight.

Before the session of the National Congress, Surat hosted the Bombay Provincial Conference, there, Sir Phirozeshah Mehta succeeded in excluding from the scope of discussions the themes of the radical resolutions such as were passed in Calcutta.

The reception committee for the National Congress got through Mr. Gokhale's initiative, Dr. Rash Behari Ghose nominated to the office of the President, despite protests from the Nationalists, who wanted Lajpat Rai, just released from jail, for

that office.

## SUSPICION

The Moderates pleaded that to put Lajpat Rai, on the Chair was to invite the immediate wrath of the Government. "We cannot afford to flout Government at this stage. The authorities throttle our movement in no time."

The early thrill of swaraj which was then dawning in a thousand hearts and was nourished day after day by the irresistible herald of revolution Sri Aurobindo's "Bande Mataram," got a rude shock at the attitude of the Moderates.

To add to the agony of the Nationalists, the agenda for discussion, which was circulated only ten days before the Congress was found to be devoid of vital items like self-government, boycott and national education.

A solitary copy of the pamphlet which the Nationalists distributed immediately after the Surat Congress, now to be found among the Gokhale Papers in the National Archives (New Delhi), says that these omissions naturally strengthened the suspicion that the Moderates really intended to go back from the position taken up by the Calcutta Congress.

The press strongly commented upon this omission, and Mr. Tilak, who reached Surat on the morning of the December 23, denounced such retrogression as suicidal in the interests of the country, more especially at that juncture. At a mass meeting held that evening he appealed to the Surat public to help the Nationalists in their endeavours to maintain at least the *status quo* in these matters.

## SHOW DOWN

The next day a conference of about 500 Nationalist delegates was held under the chairmanship of Sri Aurobindo where it was decided that the Nationalists should prevent the attempted retrogression of the Congress by all constitutional means, even by opposing the election of the President if necessary.

A letter was also written to the Congress Secretaries requesting them to make arrangements for dividing the house; if need be on every contested proposition.

But the Moderates were adamant and too sure of success. Records show that if any group did strive had to avoid a show-down. It was the group of the Nationalists.

Sri Aurobindo, Tilak and Khaparde, accompanied by Motilal Ghose of *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, went to Surendra Nath Banerji's camp aud offered to abstain from opposing the election of the President if the Congress would at least reiterate the Calcutta resolutions.

Bannerji agreed to negotiate. But he was not heard from again.

For some time it was doubtful as to which side would have the majority, but finally, in this moderate city, the party was able to bring in a crowd of so-called delegates numbering 1,300 while the Nationalists were able by the same method to muster 1,100.

It was known that the Moderate leaders had prepared a new constitution for the Congress under which it would be practically impossible for the Nationalists to command a majority at any annual session for many years to come.

The younger Nationalists, especially those from Maharashtra, were determined to prevent this by any means. They decided to break the Congress if they could not swamp it.

This decision was not known to Tilak and the older leaders. But it was known to Sri Aurobindo.

## STORM

The session began before an audience of over ten thousand strong. The President-elect Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, followed by other leaders, entered the pandal amidst cheers from their supporters.

When Dewan Bahadur Ambalal Desai proposed that Dr. Ghose take the Chair, only a murmur was heard from a section of the audience. But as soon as Mr. Surendra Nath Bannerji stood up to second the proposal, his words were drowned in the year spliting chorus of protest.

The greatest orator of the then Bengal, the pied piper of many a rally, had the jolt of his life. Henry Nevinson has left his first hand account :

"Waving their arms their scarves, their sticks and umbrellas,

a solid mass of delegates and spectators on the right of the Chair sprang to their feet and shouted without a moment's pause. . .

"The whole ten thousand were on their feet, shouting for order, shouting for tumult.

"Mr. Malvi (Chairman of the Reception Committee), still half in the chair, rang his brass Benares bell and rang in vain. Surendra Nath sprang upon the very table itself. Even a voice like his was not above a whisper in the din. Again and again he shouted, unheard as silence. He sat down and for a moment the storm was lulled.

The voices of the leaders were audible, consulting in agitated tones—Dr. Ghose shrill, impatient, and perturbed with anger; Mr. Gokhale distressed, anxious, harassed with vain negotiation and sleepless nights. Already one caught the word 'suspicion.'

"If they will not hear Surendra Nath, whom will they hear ?" said one. 'It is an insult to the Congress', said another. 'An insult to Bengal' cried a third.

"Again Surendra Nath sprang on the table, and again the assembly roared with clamour. Again the Chairman rang his Benares bell, and rang in vain. In an inaudible voice, like a sob he declared the sitting suspended."

"The confrontation was resumed the next day. Surendra Nath exhorted the delegates to maintain peace and Motilal Nehru spoke briefly to the same effect before Dr. Ghose occupied the Presidential chair.

The 'President' had hardly begun to read his address when Tilak stood up. He had given notice of an amendment and he must move it.

"You cannot move an adjournment of the Congress," cried Mr. Malvi. "I declare you out of order."

"I wish to move an amendment to the election of President, and you are not in the chair", Mr. Tilak replied.

"I declare you out of order !" cried Dr. Ghose.

## FURY

"You have not been elected" answered Mr. Tilak, "I appeal to the delegates."

Navineon's superb narration goes thus :

"Uproar downed the rest. With folded arms Mr. Tilak faced the audience. On either side of him young Moderates sprang to their feet, wildly gesticulating vengeance. Shaking their fists and yelling to the air, they clamoured to hurl him down the step of the platform.

"Behind him Dr. Ghose mounted the table, and ringing an unheard bell, harangued the storm in shrill, agitated, unintelligible denunciations. Restraining the rage of Moderates ingeminating peace if ever men ingeminated, Mr. Gokhale, sweet-natured even in extremes, stood beside his old opponent, flinging out both arms to protect him from the threatened onset.

"But Mr. Tilak asked for no protection. He stood there with folded arms, defiant, calling on violence to do its worst, calling on violence to move him, for he would move for nothing else in hell or heaven.

"In front the white-clad audience roared like a tumultuous sea.

"Suddenly something flew through the air—a shoe !—a Mahratta shoe—reddish leather, pointed toe, sole studded with lead.

"Its struck Surendra Nath Bannerji on the check; it cannoned off upon Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. It flew, it fell, and as at a given signal, white waves of turband men surged up the escarpment of the platform.

"Leaping, climbing, hissing the breath of fury, brandishing long sticks, they came, striking at any head that looked to them Moderate, and in another moment, between brown legs standing upon the green-baize table, I caught glimpses of the Indian National Congress dissolving in chaos.

"Like Goethe at the battle of Valmy, I could have said. "Today marks the beginning of a new era, and you can say that you were present at it !"

## BREAK-UP

Mr. Nevinson was right and significantly so. It was, indeed the beginning of a new era.

Next day two different conferences were held. The Nationalists held their conference in a large courtyard—and they came in "silent crowds."

Mr. Nevinson observes, "Grave and silent. I think without saying a single word Mr. Aurobindo Ghose took the Chair, and sat unmoved, with far-off eyes as one who gazes at futurity.

"In clear, short sentences, without eloquence or passion, Mr. Tilak spoke till the stars shone out and someone kindled a lantern at his side."

This break-up was essential in order to drive home the truth that there was no longer scope for compromise so far as Swaraj was concerned. The importance of this truth—the gift of the Surat Congress—can never be exaggerated.

Long afterwards, to reply to a disciple's question, Sri Aurobindo stated, "History very seldom records the things that were decisive but took place behind the veil; it records the shown front of the curtain.

"Very few people knew that it was I (without consulting Tilak) who gave the order that led to the breaking up of the Congress and was responsible for the refusal to join the new-fangled Moderate Convention which were the two decisive happenings at Surat.

"Even my action in giving the movement in Bengal its militant turn of founding the revolutionary movement is very little known."

## NEW TURN

Nevinson return with the Congress delegates in the train. He records that each station rang with shouts : "Down with the Moderate leaders !"

On the other hand Sri Aurobindo and Tilak were hailed as the harbingers of a new age who put before the nation ideals worth fighting for. The young Aurobindo became the object of adoration of the masses.

On his way back to Calcutta from Surat he stopped at several places and addressed mammoth meetings. It is doubtful whether any leader in the history of the Congress had ever known such reception as Sri Aurobindo received wherever went.

A year later, during the Alipur trial police witnesses narrated how Sri Aurobindo's carriages were drawn by the admiring gentry.

Prosecution Counsel Norton stated (he wanted this to go against Sri Aurobindo, of course) that "Aurobindo was treated with the reverence of a king wherever he had gone. As a matter of fact he was regarded as the leader not merely of Bengal but of the whole country."

Though the Moderates, by virtue of their wealth and personal influence; continued to be active for some years more, they were a waning force.

On the broad consciousness of the country the Surat Congress put an indelible imprint—that Congress must declare itself against the foreign rule more and more audibly.

And behind this grand new turn grows the personality of Sri Aurobindo, the first leader to declare openly "compelete land and absolute independence" as the aim of the Indian poitical awakening.

# 54

## THE SERENE FIGURE AT ALIPUR BOMB TRIAL

MANOJ DAS

"It will be very difficult for you to imagine the spirit of those days. Politics was not a profession, not a prospect for a prosperous career, not even a gamble where one had some chance of coming out with profit.

At least for us revolutionaries it was a sure march into the jaws of misery—forfeiture of property, loss of society, torture and ultimately, may be, death.

"But we did not care. Was not our goal as lofty as the Himalayas ? And wasn't our leader as great, as divine as the rising sun over the Himalayas ? For, our goal was the liberation of Mother India : our leader, our hero, was Sri Aurobindo".

This is now one of the three surviving political lieutenants of Sri Aurobindo explained to me the spirit that once inspired them—and still inspires them though are in their late eighties.

"The Alipore Bomb Trial was the first state trial of any magnitude in India," says the compiler of "The Alipore Bomb Trial." once a most important legal publication. The trial was big news in Indian Newspapers for one whole year—1908-1909.

Sri Aurobindo was editing the "Bande Mataram" in English and was directing the policy of "Yugantar" a Bengali daily under the control of Barindra, his younger brother. Both the papers had a large circulation.

## VIGILANCE

"Bande Mataram" of course, stirred the imagination of young India. In fact, its fame had spread beyond the shores of India.

Recently, while studying the original Minto Papers at the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, this writer saw some correspondence between Theodore Roosevelt and Lord Minto.

For some mysterious reason Roosevelt had desired to see a copy of "Bande Mataram" and Minto had obliged him. Roosevelt observed that it was a very interesting paper !

After the paper ceased publication some of its admirers brought out a journal with the same title from Geneva. The then Government of India, needless to say, promptly banned its entry into India.

*The unprecedented popularity of these two papers loomed menacingly large on the mind of the Government. "Yugantar" was preaching revolution in no uncertain terms. And "Bande Mataram" was calling for a resurgence in all spheres of the nation's life.*

S.K. Ratcliffe, the then editor of "Statesman" recollected in the "Manchester Guardian" in 1950 that 'Bande Mataram's' was "a flaming newspaper" which struck a ringing new note in Indian journalism. . . full of leading and special articles written in English with brilliance and pungency not hitherto attained in the Indian press."

Since the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and particularly after the failure of the peaceful protests from the people, news of sporadic violence was coming from all over the country.

## FORCE

But the writing on the wall took on a dangerous connotation in November 1907, when two attempts were made to wreck the train of the Governor of Bengal—and despite frantic efforts to bring the conspirators to book and utmost vigilance, the train was wrecked a fortnight later.

In April 1908, a Swadeshi propaganda meeting was stopped by the Mayor of Chandernagore, the tiny French pocket not far from Calcutta. Within a week a bomb was thrown on his house.

Towards the end of the same month, at Muzaffarnagar, a bomb was hurled at what was believed to be the carriage of

Magistrate Kingsford, who was notorious for inflicting the heaviest possible punishment on Swadeshi convicts. Two occupants of the carriage were killed.

One of the two young men who did it, Prafulla Chaki, short himself dead when caught. The other, Khudiram, was hanged.

His name became the symbol of martyrdom and a hundred variations of his picture found their way into innumerable homes. Folk-songs of Bengal still sing his praise.

In the small hours of May 2, 1908, a large party of police invaded a garden at Murari Pukar in Calcutta. The garden, with a pond and a house, was the property of Sri Aurobindo and his brothers.

As the investigation report says, those who lived there were "all educated young men belonging to respectable families." They studied "Gita", practised yogic exercises and, of course, prepared bombs.

While the raid at Murari Pukar was in full swing, another party of police surrounded Sri Aurobindo's residence at Grey Street, in Calcutta, and arrested him.

*The 'dangerous' material discovered there were some letters of Sri Aurobindo written to his wife and a lump of earth which somebody had brought there from Sri Ramakrishna's birth-place which was considered sacred.*

Sri Aurobindo did not know most of the other accuseds and it is difficult to say how much he knew about their activities. Nevertheless, he believed that a nation had the right to resort to violent force, if necessary, to shake off foreign rule.

Peace, according to him, was a part of a higher ideal, but it must be spiritual or at the least psychological in its basis; without a change in human nature it cannot come with any finality. If it is attempted on any other basis it may fail and may even make things worse than before.

The case came before the Alipore Sessions Court. The judge, Mr. Beachcroft had been a classmate of Sri Aurobindo at Cambridge, a brilliant student, second only to Sri Aurobindo.

While the trial went on a series of dramatic events took place.

One of the accused had turned approver. He was shot dead inside the jail in broad daylight by two young men who knew well that they would be hanged for it. When asked where they got the revolvers the two men replied, "Khudiram's spirit gave them

to us."

The officer who had caught Prafulla Chaki was killed and the killer was never discovered. Public Prosecutor Biswas, the able assistant of the Counsel for the Crown, Barrister Norton, was shot at on the stairs of the court by a young man who forfeited his life at the gallows for this.

Norton writes : "In the Sessions Court the accused were placed behind a network of wire. Police with fixedbayonets stood on guard throughout the room, and I had a five-chambered loaded revolver lying on my brief throughout the trial.

HISTORY

"The Government, regarding me, I presume, as a valuable investment in consequence of the fees they had paid me, insisted I should personally be guarded.

"Thereafter I was surrounded at my house and on, my drives to Court by stalwart C.I.D. officers who struck one as being more dangerous with their loaded revolvers to myself than my prospective assailants".

But the extraordinary character and conduct of the prisoners had been the talk of the country. They were always jolly. And one day, as "The Bengalee" reports :

> "Before the court sat, in fact before the clattering of the handcuffs and cracking of boots were stopped, a voice, at once melodious and powerful, issued forth from the prisoner's dock. It at once forced itself upon the attention of everyone inside the courtroom.
>
> "The sound grew in volume and assumed the form of a song and its manifold fluctuations in tune became perceptible and the words come to be heard distinctly one after another.
>
> "All the 'golmal' in the room—even on the veranda—was at once hushed into perfect silence. even the European sergeants —to whose ears an Indian tune would not naturally sound very sweet—adopted the posture of attention and began to listen with undivided attention."

The theme of the song was : love of the motherland.

*Amidst all this Sri Aurobindo stood serene and silent, the*

*object of adoration of his fellow-convicts and a riddle to others. He did not even feel it necessary to discuss about his defence with his lawyer C.R. Das, later the celebrated Deshbandhu Chittaranjan.*

He was least perturbed at Mr. Norton's desperate efforts to secure conviction for him. As the judge observed later, "He is the accused whom more than any other the prosecution are anxious to have convicted, and but for his presence in the dock there is no doubt the case would have been finished long ago."

Sir Aurobindo then was approaching the turning point in his life.

Although he had taken up yoga since 1904, it was now that the inner spiritual life and realisation which had continually been increasing in magnitude claimed him entirely.

His work now far exceeded the service and liberation of his country and fixed itself in an aim which was world-wide in its bearing and concerned with the whole future of humanity.

## TURMOIL

Inspired were the words with which C.R. Das concluded his defence argument : . . . long after this controversy is hushed in silence, long after this turmoil, this agitation ceases, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity.

"*Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India but across distant seas and lands. Therefore, I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the bar of this court but before the bar of the High Court of History.*"

Sri Aurobindo was acquitted in the Court of Mr. Beachcroft . . . And, no doubt, in the High Court of History. In the six decades that have passed since then the light that is Sri Aurobindo has glowed brightly in the firmament of human consciousness.

# 55

## AUROBINDO AND DARWIN

DEBASIS GHOSE*

Evolution constitutes the keynote of modern thought. It made the materialist view of the universe and life complete. So Darwin's name has been a bugbear to the religious camp. Newtonian physics was actually not so difficult for its apologists to accommodate. In fact, it could even be welcomed by religious people as lending support to the argument of 'design'. But religion relented under the attack of Darwin who undermined the argument of design by his theory of blind evolution. When Darwin first propounded it, he was prosecuted in a court of law by the church for his anti-Biblical stand and was made to pay a token fine for the "crime".

But although Darwinism made the position unsafe for religion *per se*, it immediately made the position unsafe for Christianity which believes in a transcendental God. Christianity inherited from Judaism the belief in God as a *strictly* personal being who created and ruled the world but remained aloof from and above it. Newtonian physics encouraged thinkers to view the universe as a gigantic watch. So God, if he exists, must be outside the machine which he has made and set in motion. In a sense therefore a purely transcendental monotheism is more amenable to a rational explanation of the universe. Because of the externality and aloofness of the Creator from the creation, he could be easily eliminated

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from the scheme of the universe without doing any harm to it. Darwinism, however, showed that the universe has not come ready-made from the hands of God. It has grown gradually to be what it is through the play of forces inherent in it. It meant recognition of immanent energy by means of which the universe is undergoing constant changes. If, therefore, the idea of God is to be retained at all, Darwinism suggests a God within, rather than without, the world process. The doctrine of divine immanence thus gained at the cost of that of divine transcendence. Pantheism, however, destroys the personality of God. So it has been claimed that God is larger than the universe which exhausts only a part of his being. God is thus immanent in the universe and also transcends it. This doctrine has been called panentheism to distinguish it from pantheism. As a result, Christianity has to be revised in the light of Drawinian ideas.

Unlike Christianity, Hinduism did not find it difficult to assimilate Darwinian ideas, because from the beginning Vedanta viewed God as both transcendent and immanent in nature. Aurobindo could easily spiritualise the concept of evolution and integrate it with Vedantic thought. Darwin spoke of the blind and mechanical process of nature but Aurobindo made it conscious and teleological. Evolution is not of matter but of *Sachchidananda.* World-evolution has been portrayed by him as nothing but the drive of *Sachchidananda* for self-expression out of fun. This drive was not yet exhausted itself, and the process of evolution is threefold—downward, upward and inward. The descending process is called involution and the ascending process evolution. Evolution is conditioned by involution, and the process is interlinked. The inward process is integration.

Gandhi was no scholar, and the challenge of Darwinism did not concern him much. Although he went on calling himself a Vedantist and often spoke of both transcendence and immanence of God, he did not think it worthwhile to integrate Darwinian ideas with his religious thought. His religious thought remained peculiarly pre-Darwinian. He regarded the universe, with men in it and God both above and within it, as constituting one organic whole ready-made and more or less static in nature. It is Aurobindo who sought to meet the challenge of Darwinian ideas, and with this end in view he sought to modernise the Hindu idealist thought propounded in the Upanishads and the Vedanta.

In the battle royal against the rise of modern science religion had to willy-nilly stage a retreat. But it is still trying to save its position by grotesque interpretations of the findings of science. In the West what Eddington and Jeans have done with new physics Bergson has done with biology. In the East Aurobindo is the counter-part of Bergson. Since spiritualism constitutes the principal interest of Aurobindo, he is more concerned with biological evolution than with physical.

The modern scientific view is that life emerged from matter. Aurobindo, however, added that this emergence would not have been possible unless life was *already* involved in matter. The emergence of life was thus a pre-ordained event in the cosmic plan and all the higher emergents are latent in it. This is, according to Aurobindo, the meaning of the statement in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* that "matter is Brahman". It is accordingly necessary to consider matter also as spiritual. Matter is not different from spirit. It is only at a different level of evolution. Matter is spirit in a gross form and spirit is matter in a subtle form. Both are aspects of "One Omnipresent Reality—the Sachchidananda." Divine Life thus exists in us both as a potentiality and a necessity. Unlike Gandhi, Aurobindo is of the opinion that our present life is unfinished. We are destined to exceed the present limit and evolve into a higher life which has been secretly working within us from the very beginning.

In Aurobindo's scheme the Absolute Reality (*Sachchidananda*) was a Pure Existent. But his energy and movement (*chit*) are also equally real. Being therefore connotes becoming. When the urge for self-expression appeared in the *Sachchidananda*, he expressed himself in the following order—*Sachchidananda*, Supermind, Mind, Life and Matter. It was the descending order called involution. But from the very dawn of creation the spirit that was involved in matter began its slow but sure movement upward back to its source of origin. The ascending order called evolution is thus—Matter, Life, Mind and Supermind. It is as if the dwellers of a house are using the same stairway both for ascending and descending purpose. Further, Aurobindo visualised an inward movement of the evolutionary process bringing about integration in its wake. When thus life evolved from matter, it did not escape from matter. It only energised matter. Then, when mind evolved from life, a new integration was made of all three.

Man with his highly developed mind is, according to Aurobindo, by no means the final phase of the evolutionary process. Mind is only a stage and not the terminus. The next step in the evolutionary process is to be the evolution of the mind into the Supermind whose instruments would be intuition and direct perception instead of the present imperfect reasoning intellect of man. There intervenes a veil between the Mind and the Supermind, and "the rending of this veil is the condition of the divine life in humanity." The veil would not, however, be rent unless there is an intense desire on the part of man to do so for receiving the light and power of the Supermind. The previous process of evolution was rather blind and instinctive. Hence, it was slow and desultory. But to hasten the next step in the evolutionary process man must consciously participate in it. This is the point where his philosophy is joined with his yoga. Aurobindo evolved his own technique of Integral Yoga for achieving this purpose. It would *practically* help the realisation of what philosophy has *theoretically* established as a necessary step. That is why Aurobindo has characterised yoga as "conscious evolution." If there is a reservoir of water adjacent to a stretch of field with a sluice-gate, the water would rush forth into the field as soon as the gate is opened. Yoga exactly serves as a sluice-gate. The Supermind is indeed the culmination and consummation of the mind. But there is such a vast difference between the two that some intermediate stages like Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind and Overmind have also been visualised.

The evolution of mind into Supermind appears to Aurobindo as inevitable, because the essential urge behind the evolutionary process is not the creation of increasingly intricate physical forms but also to turn the original inconscience of matter, through some successive sub-conscious and partly-conscious stages, into a complete and integral consciousness. Since mental consciousness has evolved out of a lower stage of sub-mental consciousness, it must evolve itself into a higher state of supra-mental consciousness sooner or later. The conception of Supermind is the pivot around which Aurobindo's philosophy has grown and revolved.

Thus philosophy, however, appears to be a modernised version of the scheme of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* which has seen man as living in a number of successive stages of reality—*annamaya, praṇamaya, monomaya, vijṇanamaya* and *anandamaya*. Corresponding

to these stages we have the following stages of man—physical man, vital man, mental man, supramental man and the *jivanmukta* man resting in *Sachchidananda* consciousness. Aurobindo's fertile mind has worked out this scheme. He also invented a new vocabulary to designate the old wine in a new bottle.

In fact, Aurobindo sought to reconstruct the Indian idealist philosophy. He has more or less done to the Upanisadic doctrine what the gnotics did to Christianity.

Harnack has defined gnosticism as the hellenising of Christianity. It sought to "rationalise" the Christian doctrine by means of categories of Greek thought so as to make it acceptable to cultivated minds. Gnosticism throws new light on such issues as the nature of the Divine Being, the interaction of Spirit with matter, etc. Its speculation was, however, made on a typical mystic experience and not on the ordinary intellectual plane.

The central idea of gnosticism is the doctrine of redemption. The original Christian doctrine of light and darkness became that of spirit and matter under the influence of Greek thought. Redemption is deliverance from the material world which has been conceived as darkness. The goal of the redemptive process is a return to its original place in the heavenly light through successive stages of being. The process of redemption becomes necessary, for the Soul which belonged to the higher world had fallen taking on the forms of the Spirit of each world as it descended.

Although gnosticism exercised a profound influence upon Christianity in its formative period, it now almost a forgotten philosophy. Almost all its extant source-books are in Greek and Latin. Aurobindo who specialised in both the languages at the Cambridge University seems to have been acquainted with this highly speculative philosophy there. He has since combined some of its essential features, particularly its doctrine of ascent and descent of the soul, with the *avatarvad* of the Gita and with the teaching of the Upanisads and the Yoga system in a new synthesis. If the gnostics utilised the Greek concepts to "rationalise" the Christian doctrine, Aurobindo tried to "rationalise" the Upanisadic-cum-yogic thought with the help of some modern scientific categories, particularly the concept of evolution. Ramakrishna, as we know, had a crudeness which sometimes repelled educated minds. A dose of science with the Upanisadic doctrine was expected to make it more acceptable to them. Besides, just as

the gnostic movement sought to interweave theories concerning the nature and destiny of the soul with the ancient mythologies of the Middle East, Aurobindo re-interpreted some Hindu mythologies in the light of his new thought.

Aurobindo's attempt to harness Darwin to the task of exploring the evolutionary possibilities of man in the religious terms has, however, landed him in an awkward and self-contradictory position. If in the downward movement of the *Sachchidananda* from the Supermind to matter, the intermediate stages were the same to be covered by his ascent upward then the birth of the thinking man must precede that of the unthinking atoms. But certainly this was not the case, and Aurobindo does not say that. He, of course, referred to a theory that man was not the last but the first and eldest of the animal species. But then he pointed out that the priority of man was an ancient belief though it was not universal. It was born of the sense of the clear supremacy of man among earthly creatures; the dignity of the supremacy seeming to demand a priority of birth. He stated that "in evolutionary fact the superior is not prior but posterior in appearance, the less developed precedes the more developed and prepares it." This certainly makes nonsense of his involutionary process.

In fact, the Upanisadic doctrine of matter to which Aurobindo owed allegiance betrays an element of animism in it. Animism was born among tribes very low in the scale of civilisation, but it has an unbroken continuity even into the midst remnant of the old animistic cult. Primitive people, however, did not recognise man as the only soul-possessing being. Every living thing in their opinion had its soul which resulted in its appropriate function and power. Thus fire could burn because it had a soul, etc. This primitive animistic attitude is known as hylozoism. The philosophical position of the Upanisads was an improvement on this, in the sense that their authors no longer looked upon the universe as an aggregate of separate souls ruling different entities. They came to conceive one Universal Soul behind everything.

# 56

# AUROBINDO'S CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

T.K. TUKOL*

> "Not only Science but Art, not only book-knowledge and information but growth in culture and character are parts of a true education to help the individual to develop his capacities, to help in the forming of thinkers and creators and men of vision and action of the future, this is apart of its work."
>
> —*Aurobindo*

With the advancement of Civilization, the concept of education has been changing from time to time and from country to country, not so much in its basic objective, as in its scope and content. "There are" says Bertrand Russel, "as many divergent views as there are conceptions of human welfare." Whether education should emphasise development of the potentialities of individuals or train individuals as citizens to meet the larger needs of the country is a question which has received different answers from country to country and even from thinkers. If the ashrama-system of education in ancient India was based on the spiritual relationship between the sage and his disciples, the recent developments have been more utilitarian since education has come to be regarded as an instrument for development of physical as well as human resources which are vital to a nation's progress. During

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the British Rule in India, education was so organized as to meet predominantly the administrative needs of the rulers. Education had then ceased to be spiritual or national in character.

When Aurobindo arrived in India in February 1893 after fourteen years of his educational stay in England, he came with a firm conviction that imperialistic rule of the British should be ended. While in England he had joined a secret group of youngsters, styled the "Lotus and Dagger," pledged to end foreign rule in this country. His ardent patriotism and zeal for the national cause inspired his words and deeds. He joined the Baroda College as a lecturer in 1893. In 1906, he became the Vice-principal of the College. It was at that stage he went over to Calcutta where he found life to be most exiting and stormy. The writings of Swami Vivekananda and of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa had tremendous influence on him and his mind became rivitted on the profoundity of India's spiritualism and glorious heritage.

## BASIC RULES 3

His thoughts and actions were therefore moulded by a highly spiritualistic and patriotic fervour. He was of the opinion that in any "true and living education," three things have to be taken into account : (1) the man, (2) the individual in his common-ness and in his uniqueness, and (3) the nation or the people and universal humanity. This outline of education takes the most comprehensive view of man not only as an individual but also as a member of his nation and in certain respects transcending the territorial bonds of his own country reaching far beyond to a point of universal fraternity and brotherhood. He emphasised the oneness of man and aspirations of the universal man.

## TRUE AND LIVING EDUCATION

Aurobindo, therefore, observed that "That alone will be a true and living education which helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life all that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his

people or nation a living, a separate, and yet inseparable member." India has ever emphasised that the soul embodied is an individual body is divine and forms part of the universal self and spirit. If education were to be true it must help the individual not only to understand himself and the purpose of his life but must also lead him to a comprehension that he connot remain isolated. Education must unfold the hidden potentialities of his self through his mind, intellect and body. To realize this objective, it is not enough if we pattern our educational system to train only the intellect at the cost of the mind and spirit. There must be a harmonious development of man. In fact, education should be "an instrument for this real working of the spirit in the mind and body of the individual and the nation." Aurobindo emphasised that education should assist every individual to transcend all barriers of caste, colour and creed and rise to reach and realize oneness. In one sense, he amplifies Swami Vivekananda's view that education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.

Aurobindo is an indefatigable champion of Indian culture and civilization. He firmly believed in the Ashram-system of education which was founded on brahmacharya and the spiritual relationship of master (guru) and, Sishya. For a student, line in a forest under the guidance (sishya)—of his guru was itself an education as it enabled him to understand and imbibe the beauty, the mystery and over-powering bounty of nature and visualise the divine manifestation in numerous forms and shapes with an underlying harmony. Such direct dialogue with nature is essential for the growth of the soul and its powers.

Man is essentially a social being and the development of social conscience and consciousness must come about as a matter of course. But the infirmities of the mind in an individual are sometimes so formidable that he lives for himself, content only with the satisfation of his personal ego. The growth of the spirit is hampered and neither religion nor morals have any appeal. Such an individual cannot develop his own soul, much less can he contribute to "the preservation, strengthening of the nation, soul."

Man's highest object is the awakening and development of his spiritual being. Aurobindo held the view that every national school must impart instruction, whether as a distinct part of

teaching or not, in the essence of religion which is "to live for God, for humanity, for country, for others and for oneself." It is immaterial in what form such instruction is given, so long as it awakens in the individual student a consciousness that he lives for others, for his country and for humanity. Such education must necessarily concern itself with training the mind and intellect in such a way that the student must develop a selfless attitude and look upon himself at the servant of God. Aurobindo went to the extent of saying that spirit of Hinduism pervading in our schools "should be the essence of nationalism."

His own life as student also mirrors his ideas of education. It is undisputed that a study of classics in any language is an integral part of liberal education. The great masters in every literature have concerned themselves with the eternal values of life. Their writings whether in poetry or prose, apart from reflecting the social, moral and religious trends of their times, contain invaluable thoughts on truth, beauty and goodness and their harmonization in individual of national life as the key to achievement of real greatness. The individuals appearing in the epics are characterised by stupendous personality, magnanimous character and outstanding powers—all converging towards the victory of the good over evil. Aurobindo studied the classics in English, Greek and Latin. He acquired such amazing mastery over Greek and Latin that he was able to compose verses which evoked encomium from his teachers. He had wide tastes and his love of knowledge was marvellous. He seems to have believed that broad vision and open mind were essential both to accumulation of knowledge as also to its absorption. His tendencies were contemplative and his habits of life very simple. In order to supplement his knowledge gained form his study of the classics, he studied history of medieval and modern Europe closely to know how life and civilization had developed. He studied German and Italian in order to read Goethe, Dante and others in their own languages. His national outlook and patriotism were so intense that his interest in studying for the Indian Civil Service Examination waned since there arose in him a dislike for service as an administrator under the British. He was very much influenced by his study of Max Muller's edition of "The Sacred Books of the East" and felt convinced that the real study of Vedants was in living and not merely in thinking.

## HEALTHY MIND AND BODY

To him, a sound body was vital to spiritual life. "A divine life in a divine body" is the formula he adumbrated. He held that 'competent education of the mind is not enough without the education of the body." He regarded sports as a foundation for sound health, strength and physical fitness. Sports help in the development of discipline, morals and strong character. Participation in sports unfold qualities of courage hardihood, initiative, skill, strong will and tolerance. Equanimity of mind to accept defeat and victory with equal grace, and submission to leadership are virtues which are of great value in life. He said "one development of the utmost value is the awakening of the essential and instinctive body consciousness which can see and do what is necessary without any indication from mental thought." He advocated physical culture as an integral part of education as it aims at strengthening of the body so indispensable for stimulation of national life.

According to Aurobindo, a teacher is "not an instructor or task-master" but "a helper and a guide." To understand his teaching better and try to put it into practice its certainly the best way of showing our gratitude to him for all the light, knowledge and force which he has so generously brought to the earth. May his teaching enlighten and guide us and what we cannot do today, we shall do tomorrow.

Aurobindo stood firmly against imposition of particular training and education without consideration of the pupil's capacity, interests and attitudes. "There can be no greater error" he says "than for the parent to arrange beforehand that his son shall develop particular qualities, capacities, ideas, virtues, or be prepared for a pre-arranged career."

## THE BOOKS

Continuing study of good books is an education in itself. Great books contain lofty examples of heroes, kings, poets, priests and philosophers having an abiding supreme human interest. The great thoughts of the unique souls evoke high aspirations and place before the readers the noblest ideal of life. The company of good or great men seldom fails to have its effect. A teacher

can produce healthy effect on the minds of his pupils "if his personal life itself" is "moulded by the great things he places before his pupils." Pupils with bad qualities and habits should not be treated as delinquents but should be encouraged to reform by self-restraint, love and truth. Every child is by instinct a heroworshipper and the course of his or her life can be elevated by good examples.

Aurobindo's message to students : "There are time in a nation's history when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else, however high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our Motherland when nothing is dearer than her service, when everything else is to be directed to that end. If you will study, study for her sake : train yourselves : body and mind and soul for her service. You will earn your living that you may live for her sake. You will go abroad to foreign lands that you may bring back knowledge with which you may do service to her. Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. All is contained in that one single advice."

# 57

## ARABINDA GHOSE

D.N. BANNERJEA

"Truth is with us, Justice is with us, nature is with us, and the law of God, which is higher than human law justifies our action."—From ARABINDA GHOSE'S manifesto on *Indian Nationalism.*

Like Bepin Chandra Pal, Ghose stands for a new movement of ideas. and not as leader of a political organisation. But if Pal's ambition has been to impregnate the minds of the young with a new vision; Ghose's ambition was to capture existing organisations for the spread of his ideas. Pal has been anxious to see the triumph of high ideals over petty details; Ghose strongly felt that only through action could enthusiasm be reinforced or vision enlarged.

Thus we see that right upto the moment of his tragic retirement from public life into political exile in Pondicherry, Ghose was anxious to capture the Indian National Congress, together with other "extremist" leaders, and to change it into an institution for educating public opinion and as a training ground for political thinkers. He also felt the need for reorganising the district and provincial conferences, so that work may be continuous throughout the year, that the delegates may really represent the people, and that the new spirit of self-confidence may be enthused into the masses, among whom systematic propaganda must be carried on throughout the year. He felt that

the anaemic intellectuals of the Congress only represented themselves, so long as the masses were not well-grounded in ideas of public rights and duties. He was convinced that the annual efforts of the Congress were ridiculously inadequate, and their suppliants' attitude only betokened moral inertia that disguises lack both of training and of vigour.

His emergence into the political arena was like a meteoric flash. We find him in 1905 resign his educational appointment in the Baroda State, to seize on the opportunities which the serious turmoil in Bengal over the partition by Lord Curzon, had freshly created. He saw his chance and felt that no sacrifice was too great when the service of the motherland demanded it. He helped in the organisation of the National Council of Education in Bengal, which provided indigenous schools, and also encouraged able and enterprising youth to proceed to Japan, America and Europe, for scientific and technical pursuits.

He was anxious to reorganise the district and provincial conferences so that these might develop into media for the stimulation of interest in public matters in ever-widening circles. He infused fresh life into journalism in Bengal. This is not the time nor the place to point out indiscreet utterances in the papers edited by him. We only wish to paint out his valuable services in arousing people from their lethargy into vigorous action.

In point of intellectual ability, powers of organisation and leadership, and religious earnestness, Arabinda Ghose stands in solitary splendour in political India. His simplicity, his excessive puritanism, his love of contemplation and his charming manners, enhanced ten-fold the hypnotic hold that he had on his followers and admirers. But differences of opinion with his colleagues on the nature of national education came to a head, with the result that Arabinda Ghose resigned both his professorship in Calcutta and membership of the Council. His strongly-worded articles in the *Bande Matram* brought him into open conflict with the Government, but he escaped with impunity. Along with his brother Barendra he was charged with complicity in the famous Manicktola bomb case.

Before Mr. Beachcroft, a prisoner in the dock was awaiting his trial—in handcuffs—who a few years before had established his intellectual superiority to the presidency magistrate in the classical tripos, at King's College, Cambridge. That prisoner was

no other than Arabinda Ghose, the brilliant scholar that had easily floored the Indian Civil Service Examination in London, but failed to pass the riding test. After this disappointment Ghose went to Cambridge, where he won a scholarship and later took first-class honours in classics.

Mr. Beachcroft could find no incriminating evidence against Arabinda. So he was honourably acquitted. But the police would constantly shadow him, and later we find him flee into the French possessions with a view to evade a warrant of arrest issued against him.

Arabinda Ghose's strenuous political activities not only synchronised with the rising to flood-tide of the Bengalees' indignation over the partition fiasco, but with the coming to birth of a new philosophy of life, based mainly on the teachings of the Bhagvadgita, that affirmed the supremacy of action over mere passivity and quiescence, and issued a trumpet-call, in the name of Dharma, to deeds of heroic self-sacrifice, renouncing the lower objects of desire and the hope of reward or fear of consequences. For the first time in modern Indian history, there was a resurgent tide of self-confidence that swept over Bengal—and other parts too—leading people to recognise, as never before, that contemplation should be a mere hand-maid of action, profoundly religious in content and altruistic in aim.

Arabinda, no doubt, derived some of his inspiration from Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who, after his elaborate researches into the Vedas and the Gita had come, long before to similar conclusions, and whom Arabinda admired as a courageous political leader. It is also known that at various conferences, they would meet and have intimate association with each other on various important problems.

At the famous Congress in Surat, Arabinda read his new historic manifesto on Indian Nationalism, which is a masterpiece both in point of style and lucidity of exposition. In the manifesto Ghose makes it as clear as possible that *hatred of the English is quite alien* to true nationalist propaganda, but that the present bureaucratic *regime* leaves no scope for full development to the heirs of an ancient civilisation, spiritually superior to all forms of Western culture. And the right note is sounded when he delivers the assurance : "Truth is with us, nature is with us, justice is with us, and the law of God which is higher than human law justifies

our action."

In a series of articles on Karma yogin (realisation through action) Arabinda issued the new gospel of self-sacrifice in thrilling accents and in a manner that electrified the imagination of the rising generation. But inspite of his organising power and consciousness of the need for action, Ghose reaches the summits of spiritual exaltation when absorbed in meditation. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, in his "Awakening of India" draws a graphic picture of Arbinda Ghose—or someone exactly resembling him: Mr. MacDonald in the course of an interview was impressed with the tranquility of mind combined with the aggressive political outlook of one who saw India "exalted on a temple throne," and "across whose path the shadow of the hangman falls," and who believes that India's future is as much bound up with the success of political organisations as on the intensification of spiritual fervour.

During the war, Arabinda Ghose is reported to have sent messages of sympathy to the Government of India, from his political exile. Interviewed by a correspondent of Madras paper, Arbinda is said to have expressed satisfaction, in 1916, at the increasing friendliness prevailing between the British and the Indians, admired the presidential address of Sir S.P. Sinha, and expressed his conviction that Indian politics should not be petty or parochial, but worthy of the grand traditions of a great nation.

Arabinda has a magnetic personality which combined with a sturdy independence of thought and breadth and freshness of outlook singled him out, during the short-lived career in India, for unique and distinguished leadership. It is said by his admirers that even today he is helping India, if only through contemplative exercises, and is sending currents of spiritual energy through the life of the nation. This might be a matter of opinion but even so, it gives one some idea of how potent is the influence that he exercises on those that come under his spell.

When the history of the Indian Revolution—*not* anarchism—comes to be written, there must be full two pages dedicated to Bepin Chandra Pal and Arabinda Ghose.

Referring to Ghose, Sir Velentine Chirol says : ("Indian Unrest," p. 90). "With this gospel of active self-sacrifice none can assuredly quarrel. . . . For him British rule and Western civilisation for which it stands threaten the very life of Hinduism. . . . That

Mr. Arabinda Ghose holds violence and murder to be justifiable forms of activity for achieving that purpose cannot properly be alleged, for though he has several times been placed on his trial, and in one instance for actual complicity in political crime—namely in the Manicktolla bomb case—the law has so far acquitted him."

In fact, Ghose holds that spiritual communion and utmost freedom from earthly entanglements lead not only to individual emancipation but to the galvanising of the national consciousness to deeds of high heroism. He is a Swarajist and Vedantist, believing that the achievement of Swaraj will develop Indian spirituality, and that constant absorption in prayer and meditation and the realising of one's unity with the primal consciousness through selfless action, will facilitate the coming of Swaraj.

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## SRI AUROBINDO AND BANDE MATARAM

UMA MUKHERJEE
AND
HARIDAS MUKHERJEE

I

Bengal was the main scene of operation of a mighty revolution more than fifty years ago. The hero of that revolution was Sri Aurobindo with his group of revolutionary youths whom he had been training up in the extreme forms of self-sacrifice in the service of the country and in achieving for it *Purna Swaraj* or complete freedom. The revolution aimed at was more vital and fundamental than what is generally conceived. Its primary objective was to accomplish a moral and intellectual revolution in the mind of the country, to kindle in the people a burning desire for national freedom. Indeed, he introduced into Indian politics at the very dawn of Freedom's battle what would be called the New Thought or the New Spirit which broke away from the orthodox and traditional thought the Indian National Congress had stood for, for about a quarter of a century (1885-1905). This New Thought was an exposition of a philosophy of Nationalism, which he developed and placed on scientific foundation during the years 1906-08 against the ruling moderate and mendicant thought of the Congress. This was an epoch of intense strom and stress, of strife and effort, of great breaking and building in tune with the tumultuous awakening of a mighty people after a slumber of ages, and

it was *Bande Mataram* which was the *Sanjivani Mantra* or the resurrection of the country as a deity. This conception was a reborn passion for the country, which appeared no longer as a mere piece of earth but an image of the Cosmic, had then seized the mind of the people, and it was Sri Aurobindo who gave a most passionate and powerful expression to their rising hopes and aspirations. In him was incarnated the very soul of awakened India in its innate individuality and inherent spirit of integration.

II

*Bande Mataram*, the musical composition of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, was impregnated with a revolutionary fervour with the commencement of the Swadeshi Movement in 1905 when at a fatal moment it suddenly became the sanctified hymn of Nationalism, a *mantra* for worshipping the country as a deity. This conception was responsible for appropriating for the daily paper its name *Bande Mataram*, founded by Bipin Chandra Pal, whom Sir Aurobindo later called "one of the mightiest prophets of Nationalism." Intended to be a daily organ of Indian Nationalism with its motto as "India for Indians", Bipin Chandra first started this paper as a personal venture in August 1906, and Sri Aurobindo soon joined him. Later on, Sri Aurobindo fell ill, and during his absence Bipin Chandra, in view of his growing differences with other members of the editorial board, severed his connection with the paper (December 1906) only to resume it in May 1908, after Sri Aurobindo's arrest in connection with the Alipur Bomb Case. Thus, during the period from December 1906 to April 1908, Sri Aurobindo was the controlling spirit of the new journal.

III

The life of the *Bande Mataram* as an Extremist organ was a short-lived one (August 1906—October 1908) due to the political attack of an alien bureaucracy. But during the brief period of its existence it effected a profound revolution in Indian politics, in the thoughts and feelings of his countrymen. It is, however, to be noted that Extremist thought in Indian politics had earlier beginnings than Sri Aurobindo's advent in Bengal in 1906. But this was

then an unorganised sentiment waiting to be developed as a system. By the middle of 1906, Sri Aurobindo fully plunged into politics and organised before long the kindred spirits into the New Party or the Nationalist Party, then called the Extremists as distinguished from the Moderates. Repudiating the narrow ideal of Colonial Self-Government or Dominion Status within the British Empire to which the old Congress was irrevocably committed, he popularised along with Bipin Chandra, the contrary conception of *Purna Swaraj* for the country. This conception was so revolutionary at that time that the Moderates who then controlled the Congress could not accept it, and so it became a serious bond of contention between the two wings of the Congress. Sri Aurobindo also rejected the petitioning policy of the Congress and built up a comprehensive practical programme covering in its sweep not only the doctrine of Passive Resistance but also the cut of Revolution. The twin methods of non-violence and violence, constitutionalism and revolution that marked India's arduous journey towards *Swaraj* were first formulated by him in clear and unmistakable terms. Sri Aurobindo was as much a Passive Resister as a Revolutionary. The question of violence and non-violence did not trouble him so much as it did many others in the subsequent phases of the Freedom Movement. He never mixed up ordinary ethics with politics which has its own ethics—the ethics of the *Kshatriya*, not that of the Brahmin, and he was never tired of preaching that the morality of the *Kshatriya* must govern our political thinking and action. "To impose in politics the Brahmanical duty of saintly sufferance", said he, "is to preach *Varnasankara*" of confusion of duties which is subversive of the social organism. He approached the question of violence and non-violence in politics purely from a pragmatic standpoint, only as a matter of policy or expediency. He was the last man to make a fetish of non-violence or *ahimsa* which he did not consider a speciality of Indian genius. On the contrary, he believed that varying doses of violence are not only helpful but indispensable for converting our petitons into demands and for bringing the legal, pacific or constitutional agitation within the realm of realisation. Thus, Sri Aurobindo was in the strictest sense of the term, a true prophet, path-finder and pioneer of India's Freedom Movement. Of all the statesmen Modern India has produced, he had the clearest vision of Indian Swaraj in its fulness as well as of the practical means to attain it by strenuous

and sustained struggle. In the political arena he exhibited two distinct but inwardly allied personalities—as a Passive Register and as a Revolutionary,—and in both the capacities he cast a powerful influence over the whole course of India's Freedom Movement which had its culmination in the transfer of power in 1947. His spirit of passive resistance found a veritable incarnation in Mahatma Gandhi while that of revolution a living embodiment in Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

IV

Contemporaries of Sri Aurobindo still recall with emotion the intense sincerity of passion with which he threw himself, heart and soul, into the National Movement during those tumultuous times. He appeared in Bengal in 1906 as a God-ordained leader of men and very soon won for himself his rightful place in the National Movement. Nationalism with him was not a political cry, not a mere sentiment, it was his passion and religion. "Nationalism," he said, "is not a mere political programme; Nationalism is a religion that has come from God; Nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live." Nationalism thus conceived found its fullest expression in the literature that he created by his unique compositions in *Bande Mataram*, the premier organ of a revolutionary Nationalism of the times. His editorial comments at once became the classics of Indian politics in those days. They made the people intensely aware of the mission and destiny of the movement, imparted to it a new moral tone and confidence and ultimately prepared the mind of the country for the revolution which was forging ahead. Indian Nationalism had in the revolutionary epoch its best prophets in Bipin Chandra and Sri Aurobindo. With many others in the field it was a political sentiment, but with them it was a divine energy for the resurrection of the national soul. They were not only its prophets and spokesmen; they were of it and in it; they made it a religion on the alter of which nothing was too dear for them to make an offering. They breathed a new fire and an unforgetable spirit in Nationalism which commenced with Herder and Mazzini but reached its fruition in their lives. Each one of these heroes was a votary of world culture and a worshipper of the Universal along with the National, but none was perhaps a greater synthetic force than Sri Aurobindo. He was a perfect blend

of the National and the Universal.

V

Why is it that Sri Aurobindo was so passionately insistent on India's claim to *Swaraj* which he advocated as her inalienable birth-right? For her complete national self-fulfilment. Every nation on earth has a peculiar bent of its own, its individuality which cannot be retained, far less fostered, under the shadow of a foreign power representing a different temperament and a different genius. In his clear conception the work of Nationalism in India was two-fold. "It has," said be, "to win *Swaraj* for India so that the present unhealthy conditions of political phthisis which is overtaking Europe, may he entirely and radically cured, and it has to ensure that the *Swaraj* it brings about shall be a "*Swadeshi Swaraj* and not an importation of the European article. It is for this reason that the movement for *Swaraj* found its first expression in an outburst of Swadeshi sentiment which directed itself not merely against foreign goods, but against foreign habits, foreign dress and manners, foreign education, and sought to bring the people back to their own civilisation." Again, he wrote : "The return to ourselves is the cardinal feature of the national movement. It is national not only in the sense of political self-assertion against the domination of foreigners, but in the sense of a return upon our old national individuality."

VI

In the handling of the current political problems confronting the country at that time, Sri Aurobindo exhibited a boldness and originality all his own. His approach to the Anglo-Indian cant of Indian unity as an essential condition to her political freedom still appears strikingly novel. As part of the problem the question of Hindu-Muslim unity also received his close attention for comments. What he thought over these issues, which are still of animating interest to the country, is to be seen in the articles he wrote in *Bande Mataram* (1906-1908). A trained student of history and literature and politics, he was not a politician of the demagogic type. He could rise above the common prejudices of his times and view the current events in their true national and international

context. A super-idealist as he was, he was a *real-politiker* also at the same time. He had no sympathy with that class of minds that fights shy of battle in the hour of battle out of false humanitarian impulse. He preferred manly resistance to tyranny even by violence to a cowardly refusal to give battle under cover of a *sattwic* ideal. Times without number he warned his countrymen that, circumstanced as India was at that time, a fierce turmoil and tension with the interest adverse to the national interest was all but natural and so he counselled them to brave the situation in that spirit. When the news of the Jamalpur *julum* or atrocities let loose on the Hindus by the bureaucracy with the help of its Mahomedan mercenaries leading to the desecration of the temple and violation of woman's chastity reached him at Calcutta, he at once administered a sharp rebuke to the Hindus for their utter apathy and demoralisation in the following words :

"From all parts of East Bengal comes the terrible news of violation and threatened violation of women by *badmashes*. Bengal is then dead to all intents and purposes. Nowhere is the honour of women so much valued as in India. And as our people do not lift their finger or court death when seeing women violated before their eyes, they have morally ceased to exist. Long subjection has crushed the soul and left the mere corpse. If Bengal has been seized with such a severe palsy as not to strike a blow even for the honour of our women, it is better for her people to be blotted from the earth than encumber it longer with their disgrace."*

Two days later, Sri Aurobindo again by way of a strong warning both to the people and the bureaucracy made the spirited comment :

"The country in which the cry of outraged chastity rises day after day unavenged to heaven is doomed to ruin. The Government which permits it and stands looking on smiling and with folded hands, is already doomed by the justice of heaven; it shall pass away and be as if it had never been. But we too who look on while our sisters and mothers are

*Vide *Bande Mataram*, May 2, 1907, p. 4.

outraged,—against us too the doom will go forth unless we act before it is too late."†

The spirit that these words breathe evidently prefers death to dishonour. It demonstrates beyond the shadow of a doubt the moral and spiritual stuff of which Sri Aurobindo was made. He was neither a weak pacifist nor an impotent moralist in politics which is by its very nature a trail of strength between opposing forces. Never for a moment did he confuse the end with the means nor did he adopt in the hour of actual crisis a doctrinaire attitude which often becomes a cover for immoral inaction or the dull passivity of the mind. The spirit to serve and to suffer was as strong in him as the spirit to resist and to strike. His ideal was "a free and united India," but his whole mind was against any timid compromise which involves a surrender or negation of the very ideal for which reconciliation is sought. "True national unity," he said, "is the unity of self-dedication to the country when the liberty and greatness of our motherland is the paramount consideration to which all others must be subordinated." If the spirit of self-dedication to the country is wanting, men cry for unity will not make us united. The true basis of unity can be laid only under the inspiration of an overmastering ideal—an ideal transcending ourselves and to which all of us can offer an unquestioned allegiance. This sort of unity alone can lift a people out of despair and degradation.

## VII

In fine, it has to be noted that party politics in modern India really dates from the Swadeshi Days when the ruling Moderates came under challenge from the rising Extremists or the Nationalists. They differed from each other both in respect of the political ideal and the practical means to realise it. Animated by a larger ideal of freedom, the Extremists preferred the perils of a hard and difficult struggle with the bureaucracy to the blessings of prosperous serfdom. Thus, they introduced a new discordant element into Indian politics and the introduction of this new element threatened to break the so-called Congress unity. The

†*Bande Mataram*, May 9, 1907, p. 4.

Moderates got alarmed and began to openly denounce the new political trend as inimical to national progress. It is well to remember what Sri Aurobindo as an accredited leader of the New Party wrote at that time in reply to the Moderate charge of fomenting disunity in the Congress: "There is," observed Aurobindo, "a cant phrase which is always on our lips in season and out of season, and it is the cry for unity. We call it a cant phrase because those who use it, have not the slightest conception of what they mean, when they use it, but simply employ it as an effective formula to discourage independence in thought and progressiveness in action. It is not the reality of united thought and action which they desire, it is merely the appearance of unity. Be your views what they may, suppress them, for they will spoil our unity; swallow your principles, they will spoil our unity; do not battle for what you think to be the right, it will spoil our unity, leave the necessary things undone, for the attempt to do them will spoil our unity; this is the cry. The presidence of a dead and lifeless unity is the true index of national degradation, quite as much as the prevalence of a living unity is the index of national greatness. So long as India was asleep and only talking in its dreams, a show of unity was possible, but the moment it awoke and began to live, this show was bound to be broken."

"There is," Aurobindo wrote further, "another idea underlying the cry for unity and it is the utterly erroneous impression that nations have never been able to liberate themselves and do great deeds unless they were entirely and flawlessly united within. History supplies no justification for this specious theory. On the contrary, when a nation is living at high pressure and feelings are at white heat, opinions and actions are bound to diverge far more strongly than at other times. In the strenuous times before the American War of Independence, the colony was divided into a powerful minority who were wholly for England, a great hesitating majority who were for internal autonomy but unwilling to use extreme methods and a small but vigorous minority of extremists with men like John Adams at their head who pushed the country into revolt and created a nation."*

*Vide the author's *Bande Mataram and Indian Nationalism*, p. 52.

# 59

# AUROBINDONIAN INTERPRETATION OF GURBANI

K.V. ADVANI

Lt. Col. Duleep Singh has stressed the need of *gurbani's* Aurobindonian interpretation in his lucid and thought-provoking thesis in *Advent* of August 1974 published from Pondicherry. Many devout Sikhs will agree with the learned author. In the ultimate analysis *gurbani* has similar strains of inituitive and astral sensibility and contemplative felicity as the Indian cultural thought through the ages. Interpreters and expounders of Hindu thought, culture and religious philosophy have endeavoured to disseminate teachings of Hindu Dharma in their own way and according to their own light and intuition. But Shri Aurobindo stands out quite eminently and is a luminescent star in the firmament of such luminaries and leaders of thought. Pandit Nehru has given expression to such a belief in his book *Discovery of India*.

Quoting Lt. Col. Duleep Singh, "The Study of Sri Aurobindo has meant for me better understanding of the Sikh Scriptures. The message of *Gita* finds complete fulfilment in the life of Guru Gobind Singh. Study of Sri Aurobindo enables us to understand much better the significance of the Guru's life and his *gurbani*— our great spiritual heritage—"a veritable national asset" as Sri Aurobindo calls it in his book *The Renaissance of India.*

There is depth of meaning and spiritual significance in Lt. Col. Duleep Singh's thesis. He has endeavoured to show similarity

between great and abiding teachings of *gurbani* and Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of *Gita*, integral *Yoga* and *Vedas*. He is very much hypnotised by "*savitri*" the great Epic and *Magnum Opus* based on *Rig Veda*.

*Gurbani* says. . . . "Come along my dear self let me show you the path to ineffable bliss and partake of the rare delicacies of the Royal Banquet." This means evolution of spiritual puissance and felicity. A lotus can bloom in dew-fresh dawn and limpid waters. If it is not nourished by golden rays of sun and limpid waters of lake, it will fade away in no time. Individual alone cannot accomplish the great task and get the boom of God's grace. Communion with great souls is the first essential. As the company so the colour. To enrich one's mind and heart, with spiritual wealth of *gurbani*, the soul is to be made fallow till seed time comes. Nothing is more dangerous than a rash step. That will cause more harm than good. Individual must not abnegate society. He is an important cog in the wheel of society; insofar as he can play a definitely virile part in life, by eliminating all that is unworthy of human destiny and ethos.

Guru Gobind Singh's life was consummation of spiritual revolution and evolution started by Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak faced the onslaught of spiritual decay in his own unique and prophetic way. But Guru Gobind Singh had to create Khalsa Panth for regeneration of Sikhs and Hindus. Tenebrous forces of superstitions and national sloth and degeneration have to be countered with vigilance as tangibly shown by French people in the tardy march of centuries of man's evolution.

In *Gita*, it is Krishna who comes in the picture and dominates the scene. Guru Gobind Singh through his divine *sadhana* on Hemkunt Mount, realised what Krishna realised on the battle-field, before Arjuna and his army were made ready to accomplish and consummate Lord Krishna's will.

Guru Gobind Singh had the inner virility and puissance of *Shabad*. In fact, "Will of God" was his constant guide and succour. Shri Aurobindo has used his poetic art in a consummate style to bring out great beauties in character of Guru Gobind Singh. He has shown him as superior to the Maratha hero Shivaji.

Integral Yoga expounded by Sri Aurobindo connotes all that *gurbani's* idealism, *Vismad* of *gurbani* has come to mean grand

mystery to Sri Aurobindo. *Gurbani* stresses the need to transform finite mortal man into a pure and sublime entity. Integral Yoga points to it as well. The tingling and tangible rhythm of music and beauty of cadences in *gurbani* have been hued and painted in a tapestried form by Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri*. Let puny man follow path of righteousness and destroy all that is unmanly in his character. Saga of Guru Gobind Singh's life is nothing but a soulful prayer of "Will of God" whom he addressed as "*Akal Purkha*" the Immortal Reality.

Quoting Lt. Col. Duleep Singh. . . . "Involvement with Great Beauty invariably leads to enlightenment of action and life. There are occasions when a 'moment becomes eternity.' Examples of vision in action are many. . . Christ delivering Sermon on the Mount, Sidharatha walking away from the place, Guru Gobind Singh riding his black steed into the battle field or the Martyr offering his head to uphold cherished ideal of Dharma or national honour."

*Gurbani's* interpretation from Aurobindonian point of view inspires more faith and drenches the dry soul with more elixir :

> "This body is itself Dharma's vehicle in which shines Light of the True God. The secret diamond lies hidden. A rare Gurumukh disciple can intake its secret."

Sri Aurobindo with the touch of a master artist has brought out effulgent beauties of *gurbani* quotation in a rare style.

Guru Gobind Singh sings with ecstasy and felicity . . .

The cosmic phenomenon is of eternal truth and shape;
Water that flows in the river or comes out of;
The bottom of the well is the same.

Aurobindonian interpretation lays stress on divine effulgence so much so that all that is stray and meaningless is lost sight of. In fact, the endeavours to transfigure into divine curves, by truly sublime insight, perception and intuition.

# 60

## SRI AUROBINDO

P. NAGARAJA RAO

Shri Aurobindo stands out as one of the greatest of our contemporary Indian philosophers. Out of the fullness of his spiritual experience, in solitude, for over three decades, he has poured forth in verse and prose in imposing metaphysical system embodying a grand ideal, and has outlined the way to attain it. His mystical experience has revealed to him the secret of human existence, the significance of human life and the goal of man.

Sri Aurobindo's rich experience is explained to us in terms of human reason and logical thought. The exposition is the work of a commanding intellect, with a massive and astounding scholarship, that regales the most astute mind and, on occasion, baffles the best of us. In the process of the exposition, he recaptures the dynamism and integral approach to Reality found in the Upanishads and the Gita. His exposition is marked by arguments well sustained, closely reasoned and forcefully expounded. He is, in his own words, "a metaphysician doubled with a Yogi." Our national poet Tagore in 1928 exclaimed on seeing Sri Aurobindo, "You have the Word and we are waiting to accept it from you. India will speak through your voice to the world."

At the end of Sri Aurobindo's memorable trial, Chittaranjan Das concluded his address to the jury with these prophetic words, "Long after this controversy is hushed in silence, long after this turmoil, this agitation ceases, long after he is dead and gone, he

will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India, but across distant seas and lands."

These words have come true today. The triple sources of his philosophical systems are the scriptures, his intense spiritual experience, and human reasoning which explains it. We get the best exposition of his system in his *Life Divine*, *Synthesis of Yoga*, *Savitri* (the epic poem), *Essays on the Gita*, his translation and notes of *Isavasyopanisad*, and his volumes of Letters.

We have several accounts of his system from Eastern and Western writers. There are a few learned journals that discuss in their pages the different aspects of his philosophy and the nature of the spiritual discipline he outlined and practised. Pondicherry, the place where Sri Aurobindo lived from 4th April, 1910 to 5th December, 1950, is a spiritual centre for many to pursue the discipline of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo is called the Integral Yoga of Purna Yoga. It is a pattern of monism, but not the same as that of Sankara. Ultimate Reality is not a homogenous Pure-Consciousness that admits of no determination. Reality is rich and all embracing. It is Consciousness-Force, Truth and Bliss. It has three aspects : (I) The pure transcendent aspect, (2) the dynamic aspect, and (3) the manifestation aspect. All three represent the Divine in different poises, i.e., the static, the dynamic and the manifestated aspects.

Sankara's monism does not accord reality to the world of manifestation. There is the distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal states. The phenomenal is the bridge we have to cross in order to realise Brahman. By negating the world of Samsara, man realises his true nature of Brahman. In the history of different schools of Vedanta we find the one or the other aspect of Reality explained in a significant manner.

According to Sri Aurobindo, Reality is an Infinite. The logic of Sri Aurobindo's Infinite is not based on the principle of exclusion of the finite. It is as an all-inclusive, rich Infinite. Intellectually, it is difficult to comprehend the nature of Reality that is Infinite.

The human intellect is fragmentary in its functioning and it is bound down by several limitations. "The intellect can only catch

fragmentary representations of the Truth and not the entire thing itself." It cannot give us an integral experience. The nature of the human intellect as well as its conclusions are not absolutely certain. There is variation in degree, relative to the things it studies. It can only give us mediate knowledge and not immediate experience. The final and the only means for the realisation of the Infinite is direct experience. The resulting philosophy, in terms of logic, is the faithful transcription of the direct experience. Logic by itself is a very blunt instrument. "It is all blade and no handle." It is futile to seek to realise or comprehend the Infinite in terms of Reason. Reason is earth-bound and it cannot illumine the Spiritual.

Sri Aurobindo has built a unique system of logic round his concept of the Infinite. He writes, "The logic of the Infinite is the magic of the finite;" "When we have passed beyond all knowings, we shall have knowledge." The use of reason removes our initial scepticism, but in the end all speculative philosophical systems that solely rely on mere intellect end on an agnostic note. That is the finding of Sri Aurobindo.

He outlines four necessary factors for spiritual realisation. They are : (1) faith in Scriptures; (2) faith in the initiation of the Guru; (3) *Utsaha* or the earnestness for spiritual realisation; and (4) time. The ultimate Reality is seeped dynamically in all and is not immutable. The dynamic Reality has of itself seeped into all the grades of existence. It is found dormant in Matter, Life and in the Mind. They are divine manifestations.

In man, the degree of limitations with which the divine existence is felt is great. He has a free will; he can will his ideas. He can look before and after. Man has not merely to realise the life divine in a Transcendent Absolute and merge his individuality in It. Moksha is not the flight into the Transcendent from the snares of the unreal manifestations. It is not the setting aside of all that is other than Brahman by negating it. It is not the partial affirmation of the Transcendent. Moksha, according to Sri Aurobindo, is an 'integral, positive affirmation of all.' It is the mighty attempt to divinise all. It does not exclude any aspect of Reality. Its logic is the logic of comprehensive inclusion and not one of negation.

Sri Aurobindo affirms out of the strength of his mystic experience that the 'contraries' found in Reality are really

complementaries. The different poises of the Absolute are complementary to one another and are not exclusive of one another. In a celebrated sentence in *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo sets forth the ideal; "To know, possess and be the divine being in an animal, egoistic consciousness, to convert out twilit or obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build peace and a self-existent Bliss where there is only a stress of transitory satisfactions besieged by physical and emotional suffering, to establish an infinite freedom in a world which presents itself as a group of mechanical necessities to discover and realise the immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation—this is offered to us the manifestation of God in matter and the goal of Nature in her terrestrial evolution.".

The mind of man or his reason is a limited instrument. It is groping its way and so it cannot give us the knowledge of ultimate Truth. Consciously, man must surrender his will to the Supermind which Sri Aurobindo variously calls the Real idea. "It is a power of Conscious-Force expressive of real being, born out of real being, and partaking of its nature, and neither a child of void nor a weaver of fictions. It is Conscious Reality throwing itself into mutable forms of Its own imperishable and immutable substance."

The Supermind is not the personal God of the theist. It is Divine Will. Its descent alone can transform human existence into divine glory. Man has to stand aside and willingly make room for the descent of the Supermind. The self-emptying must be done before the Divine filling takes place. The Supermind is a divine level of consciousness. It alone can impose a complete and radical reintegration of human personality. It goes without saying that this attainment is not an easy task. There are conditions to be fulfilled for this transformation from the human to the divine. It requires intense spiritual Sadhana. The concept of the Supermind is central to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

The ideal of Sri Aurobindo is not the narrow goal of individual liberation. It aims at total transformation. It is the most powerful challenge to *maya-vada* from a contemporary philosopher. Sri Aurobindo describes the beings who are divine as gnostic beings. He pleads for a total transformation of man. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is the most comprehensive one. It is a call to unreservedly surrender our obstinate and recalcitrant wills to

the Supermind. "It grips the thought, feeling and will of man and, forging them into an organic unity round the soul-centre, lifts them all into the embrace of the Divine. It is a life-transforming Yoga, purporting to fulfil the Time Spirit by realising the ideal of human unity and divine perfection of human life."

The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo represents a great synthesis of the best in the East and the West. It reconciles the *pravrrti marga* and the *pravrtti marga* into an integral Yoga.

His literary output goes into dozens of volumes. They represent a rich variety and a refreshing originality. In India's fight for freedom Sri Aurobindo was the first to awaken the masses in Bengal through the fiery columns of his *Bande Mataram* and *Karmayogin*. Politics and Idealism are combined in these. Sri Aurobindo made clear to the world the role of India and what she stands for in the comity of nations. His work on the 'Foundations of Indian Culture' is a classic on the subject. He gives the finest counsel to all reformers in these worlds: "All that we do or create must be consistent with the abiding spirit of India, but framed to fit into a greater harmonised rhythm and plastic to the call of a more luminous future . . . . There cannot be a healthy and victorious survival if we make of the past a fetish, instead of an inspiring impulse."

# 61

## TO READ SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA*

Why do we read the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? And if we read them, how to read them ?

Do not read for the sake of study ? to know things ? to acquire knowledge ? That is a secondary aspect, a profit gained by the way. The real purpose of coming in contact with the words of Mother and Sri Aurobindo is to become conscious, to acquire consciousness, to be more and more conscious, increase more and more the consciousness. To understand, that is to say, to seize by the mind, to grasp intellectually the writings of Mother and Sri Aurobindo is rather difficult. The easier, the more right way would be to enter into the atmosphere of the world that they have created with their words, to feel the vibration that the words emanate. For the words that they have uttered are not mere words taken or found in the dictionaries, they are not mere sounds dead syllables, they are living entities, symbols of consciousness, the consciousness of which I have just spoken. These symbols, being symbols of consciousness are luminous, they shed light all along, they are full of power and extend power all along, they have life and they are full of delight. It is this inner world that is behind the outer world of words that one has to be in touch with, be aware of, in the first instance, before one can have a mental understanding; in

* Editor, *The Advent*.

other words, you must cultivate the right attitude, a turn of your consciousness in tune with the consciousness that has worked out the words of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. You have to take a plunge, as it were, dip into the waters, and be soaked in the caress of that element, to come in the living touch of the substance of words, go behind the meaning, if necessary, avoiding it even. You must contact the living sap, the *rasa*, that has poured itself out in the creation. If you have tasted of that, then—it has its own light—that will suffuse you automatically with its radiance; the delight of bathing in the living spring will formulate itself in rythms of knowledge and true understanding.

At least such should be the basis of approach to the works of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. You may have possessed a rich intellectual apparatus, you may have all the information that sciences and philosophies have gathered, you may have perused the whole story of the evolution of human knowledge upto the present time, all these are lesser lights, they do not illuminate the light before which you stand. That light is shown and recognised by its own reflection or emanation in you, the little light that is in you, your soul.

Indeed, there have been instances where great intellectuals, famed savants found themselves bewildered before the simplest magic phrases of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. On the other hand, simpler minds with no burden of learning, nor pride of pedantry, with their pure streak of light in the depth of their consciousness were able to seize and unveil the secret sense.

Your mental understanding, your intellectual apprehension may or will add to the joy of your discovery; one that is perhaps at the end or subsequently, when your brain, your physical reason has been washed by the flow of the inner light, when it has been made pure and plastic and docile.

In another way, to understand the Truth—the Truth that the words of the Mother of Sri Aurobindo express—you must start by living it, approaching it not merely through your mind, in fact not even through your heart, but possessing it in the very body. The Mother says, real understanding comes by the body-understanding. Indeed, the true aim of knowledge is not merely to know but to be.

## A TRUE PROFESSOR

The Mother says a professor, a true professor, must be truly a yogi. That is to say, a teacher, even a school-teacher, one imparting what is called secular education, has to be nothing less than a yogi. The Indian term for teacher is 'guru' and 'guru' meant a teacher both spiritual and secular. This distinction of the two words is made by the modern spirit, it did not belong to the ancient culture. The secular knowledge was also considered a necessary part of the spiritual knowledge, that which prepared for it and led towards it. The 'apara vidya' or the 'vedangas' were but limbs of the supreme knowledge 'para vidya' and 'veda.'

A teacher has to be a yogi does not mean that he is to be a paragon of moral qualities, following, for example, the ten commandments scrupulously. Not to tell a lie, not to lose temper to be patient, impartial, to be honset and unselfish, all these more or less social qualities have their values but something else is needed for the true teacher, something of another category and quality. I said social qualities, I might say also mental qualities. The consciousness of the teacher has to be other than mental, something deeper, more abiding, more constant, less relative something absolute. Do we then prescribe the supreme Brahma-consciousness for the teacher ? Not quite. We mean the consciousness of a soul, the living light that is within every aspiring human being. It is a glad luminousness in the heart that can exist with or without the brilliant riches of a cultivated brain. And one need not go so far as the vedantic Sachchidananda consciousness.

That is the first and primary necessity. When the teacher approaches the pupil, he must know how to do it in and through that inner intimate consciousness. It means a fundmental attitude, a mode of being of the whole nature rather than a scientific procedure, all the manuals of education will not able to procure you this treasure. It is an acquisition that develops or manifests spontaneously through an earnest desire, that is to say, aspiration for it. It is this that establishes a strange contact with the pupil, radiates or infuses the knowledge, even the learning that the teacher possesses, infallibly and naturally into the mind and brain of the pupil.

Books and programmes are of secondary importance, they are only a scaffolding, the building within is made of a different kind of bricks. A happy luminous consciousness within is the teacher's asset, with that he achieves all, without it he fails always.

If the teacher is to be a yogi, the pupil on his side must be at least an aspirant. But I suppose a pupil, so long as he is a child, is a born aspirant. For, as the Mother says, a child's consciousness retains generally something of the pure inner consciousness for sometime at least until it is overshadowed by the development of the body and the mind in the ordinary normal way. Something of this, we know, has been expressed in the famous lines of the visionary English poet :

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar...
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home
Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
Shades of the prison house begin to close
Upon the growing boy.

But if the right teacher is found, that pure flame in the child's consciousness can be kept burning, can even be made to burn brighter and higher. A teacher too on his side in the presence of a pure child-flame in his pupil may profit by its warm touch; for the two by their intimate interaction grow together towards a greater fulfilment in both.

When we speak or think of education and consider the relation of the teacher and the pupil, we generally confine ourselves to the mental domain, that is to say, aim wholly or mainly at the intellectual acquisition and attainment, and only sometimes as per necessity as it were we turn at most to the moral domain, that is to say, we look for the growth of character, of good manners and behaviour—social values as we have said. Here we have tried to bring into the educationist's view a more important, a much more important and interesting domain—a new dimension of consciousness.

# 62

## SRI AUROBINDO AND INDIA'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

MANOJ DAS

Victor Hugo, the great French author, said, "Nothing is more powerful than the idea whose time has come."

Nationalism was not a new idea. But now, it seems, its time had come. It became a great force. And the British rulers of India became quite alarmed about it.

No. This spirit of nationalism must not be allowed to catch the imagination of the natives—thought the highest of the British monarch's officers in India. He was Lord Curzon, the Viceroy and Governor General.

He wanted to nip the spirit in the bud. And the spirit was very prominently budding forth in Bengal. He decided to divide Bengal. The people of a divided province cannot think or act unitedly—he thought.

But his attempt produced quite opposite result. People thought and resolved more unitedly than ever—that Curzon's move must be foiled.

This was in 1905. The whole of Bengal rose as one man and the rest of India supported the Bengali uprising. Sri Aurobindo, still a professor at Baroda, visited Bengal and inspired the new spirit-further.

Leaders of the anti-partition movement thought that there should be a college where students could learn to be fearless and could imbibe the true spirit of nationalism. Such education,

naturally, could not be expected from the colleges controlled by the Government. But where to get money for founding such a college ? And who will give shape to it ?

One evening, at a mammoth public meeting at Calcutta, a rich and noble-hearted patriot, Subodh Mullick, declared that he will donate one hundred thousand rupees to establish such a college—a national college. But he had one condition : Sri Aurobindo must be persuaded to head the institution as its principal.

Both the offer and the condition were received with loud bursts of enthusiasm. The crowd hailed Subodh Mullick as Raja. Thereafter he was always mentioned as Raja Subodh Mullick. This is a unique instance of the people spontaneously bestowing upon somebody the title of Raja.

Sri Aurobindo knew that it was high time he resigned his Baroda job. He gave up the monthly salary of Rs. 750 and many comforts and prospects and joined as Principal of the Calcutta National College at a salary of Rs. 150 which soon dwindled to Rs. 50 and then to nil !

The enthusiasm of Sri Aurobindo's admires at his coming to Calcutta, can be imagined from a tribute to him in the *Sandhya*, a Bengali journal of radical nationalism, by its illustrious editor. Brahmabandhav Upadhyay, written in 1906, on the eve of the first appearance of the *Bande Mataram* :

> "Have you ever seen the spotless all-white Aurobindo (lotus) ? The hundred-petalled Aurobindo (lotus) in full bloom in India's Manassarowar ! . . . Our Aurobindo is a rare phenomenon in the world. In him resides the *Sattvika* divine beauty, snow-white, resplendent Great and vast—vast in the amplitude or his heart, great in the glory of his own self, his *svadharma* . . . So pure and complete a man—a fire charged thunder yet tender and delicate as the lotus-petal. A man rich in knowledge, self-lost in meditation. You can nowhere find his like in all the three worlds. In order to free the land from her chains Aurobindo has broken through the glamour of Western civilisation, renounced all worldly comfort, and now as a son of the Mother he has taken charge of the *Bande Mataram*. He is the *Bhavananda, Jivananda, Dhirananda* of Rishi Bankim, all in one."

The National College flourished under the direction of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo desired to build up the students of the College as the worthy children of India.

But Sri Aurobindo could not continue to look after the college for long. More pressing needs demands his immediate attention.

Among the great sons of India was Bipin Chandra Pal, a philosopher, orator and selfless worker. He planned to publish a newspaper which would serve as a link among the political workers of the country and which would mobilise the common people behind the patriotic causes. Bipin Chandra requested Sri Aurobindo to help him, Sri Aurobindo agreed.

## "BANDE MATARAM"

The *Bande Mataram* was launched. It gained great popularity in a short time. Gradually, the entire burden of this thriving paper became vested in Sri Aurobindo.

And the paper became the herald of revolution. (Its stirring call to people to rise and serve their motherland, its biting sarcasm at the rulers, its convincing elucidation of the country's problems inaugurated a new phase in Indian journalism). It gave the people courage and a sense of dignity. Mr. S.K. Rateliffe, then the editor of *The Statesman*, recollected that the *Bande Mataram* was "full of leading and special articles written in English with brilliance and pungency not hitherto attained in the Indian Press . . . the most effective voice of what we then called nationalist extremism."

As mentioned beforehand, at the time of Sri Aurobindo's arrival in India the Congress was controlled by leaders who were meek and mild. But by now a new leadership had been formed. The masses were slowly rallying behind them and they were rapidly gaining strength.

Among such leaders was Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a great man by all standards. Together, Sri Aurobindo and Tilak championed new ideas and ideals for the Congress.

In 1960, a session of the National Congress was held in Calcutta. Under the influence of Sri Aurobindo and Tilak, the session passed resolutions that for the first time spelt out concrete nationalist ideals like Swadeshi, national education, etc. Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Bande Mataram*, "Our hopes have been

realised, our contentions recognised, if not always precisely in the from we desired or with as much clearness and precision as we ourselves would have used, yet definitely enough for all practical purposes." (31-12-1906).

Through the pages of the *Bande Mataram* and from the public platforms Sri Aurobindo gave out the famous principles of India's struggle for freedom. These principles remained strong till the end was achieved, though may not be in a manner that was in keeping with Sri Aurobindo's ideas. They were non-cooperation with the British, boycott of British goods, British courts, etc., promoting Swadeshi industries and taking to a Swadeshi way of life in everything, founding national institutions of education and organising a strong, disciplined volunteers' corps.

Moreover, Sri Aurobindo demanded complete and absolute independence for India—the first son of Mother India to do so openly.

No wonder that the colonial rulers grew panicky. They brought a case against Sri Aurobindo accusing him of preaching sedition through the *Bande Mataram*. This was the first newspaper in the country to be so charged with.

It was a great sensation. Bipin Chandra Pal, who was compelled to appear in the court, refused to give any evidence against Sri Aurobindo. For such non-cooperation with the British laws, he was sentenced to six month's imprisonment.

It was at this time that Rabindranath Tagore wrote the famous poem on Sri Aurobindo :

Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee !
O friend, my country's friend, O voice-incarnate, free.
Of India's soul !

The charge against Sri Aurobindo could not be substantiated. It could not be proved that he was the editor. So, he was acquitted. There was great jubilation in the country.

## SURAT CONGRESS SESSION

In 1907, the 23rd session of the Indian National Congress was held at Surat. By then the Congress had been divided into two

camps. Those who believed in going slow—rather very slow—so much so that they would never utter of winning freedom from the British—were known as Moderates. Those who wanted to take unambiguous steps towards freedom were known as Nationalists.

This doggerel had become very popular then :

Repression comes, but reform lingers.
And we linger on the shore.
And the Moderates wither.
And the Nationalist is more and more !

At the Surat Congress the Nationalists wanted to pass resolutions upholding the principles of Swadeshi, Boycott and Non-cooperation. But the Moderates who occupied the offices of the Reception Committee, were most unwilling to entertain these proposals. The situation became tense even before the session began.

The Moderates had chosen Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh to preside over the session. The Nationalists decided to oppose this choice. This they did only after all their efforts to persuade the Moderates ta accommodate at least some of their proposals had failed.

## CLASH OF TITANS

At last the session began before an audience more that 10,000 strong.

The President-elect, Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh, ascended the platform escorted by Moderate leaders and their supporters applauded him. Then Surendra-Nath Bannerji stood up to speak. Let us see what happened thereafter from an absorbing record left Henry Nevinson, an eye-witness to the episode.

"Waving their arms, their scarves, their sticks, and umbrellas, a solid mass of delegates and spectators on the right of the Chair sprang to their feet anu shouted without a moment's pause . . . the whole ten thousand were on their feet, shouting for order, shouting for tumult, Mr. Malvi (Chairman of the Reception Committee) still half in the chair, rang his brass Benaras bell and rang in vain Surrendra Nath sprang upon the very table itself. Even a voice like his was not a whisper

in the din. Again and again he shouted, unheard as silence. He sat down and for a moment the storm was lulled. The voice of the leaders was audible, consulting in agitated tones —Dr. Ghose shrill, impatient, and perturbed with anger, Mr. Gokhale distressed, anxious, harassed with vain negotiation and sleepless nights. Already one caught the world 'suspension.' 'If they will not hear Surendranath, whom will they hear ?' said one. 'It is an insult to the Congress,' said another. 'An insult to Bengal !' cried a third. Again Surendranath sprang on the table, and again the assembly roared with clamour. Again the Chairman rang his Benaras bell, and rang in vain. In an inaudible voice, like a sob, he declared the sitting suspended."

All was quiet for the night. But the conflict was resumed the next day. According to Mr. Nevinson, Rash Behari Ghosh, the 'President,' had hardly begun to read his address when Tilak stood up. He had given notice, sufficiently in advance, that he will move an amendment. Now he wanted to move it. But he was not allowed to do so.

Let us again read from Nevinson :

"Uproar drowned the rest. With folded arms Mr. Tilak faced the audience. On either side of him young Moderates sprang to their feet, wildly gesticulating vengeance. Shaking their fists and yelling to the air, they clamoured to hurl him down the step of the platform. Behind him Dr. Ghose mounted the table, and, ringing an unheard bell harangued the storm in shrill, agitated, unintelligible denunciations. Restraining the rage of Moderates, ingeminating peace if ever man ingeminated, Mr. Gokhale, sweetnatured even in extreme, stood beside his old opponent, flinging out both arms to protect him from the threatened onset. But Mr. Tilak asked for no protection. He stood there with folded arms, defiant, calling on violence to do its worst, calling on violence to move him, for he would move for nothing else in hell or heaven. In front, the white-clad audience roared like a tumultuous sea.

"Suddenly something flew through the air—a shoe !— Maharatta shoe ! reddish leather, pointed toe, sole studed with lead. It struck Surendranath Bannerji on the cheek; it

cannoned off upon Sir Phirozeshah Mehta. It flew, it fell, and, as at a given singal, white waves of turbaned men surged up the excarpment of the platform. Leaping, climbing, hissing the breath of fury, brandishing long sticks, they came striking at any head that looked to them Moderate, and in another moment, between brown legs standing upon the green-baize table, I caught glimpse of the Indian National Congress dissolving in chaos."

But the Congress did not dissolve. It was only the beginning of the dissolution of the Moderate Policy.

Next day two different sessions were held. The Nationalists held theirs in a large courtyard—and they came in "silent crowds." Mr. Nevinson observes, "Grave and silent, I think without saying a single word—Mr. Aurobindo Ghosh took the Chair, and sat unmoved, with far-off eyes, as one who gazes at futurity. In clear, short sentences, without eloquence or passion, Mr. Tilak spoke till the stars shone out and some one kindled a lantern at his side."

## HARBINGERS OF NEW AGE

The Surat Congress gave an un-precedented impetus to the country's march towards freedom. Sri Aurobindo and Tilak were hailed as the harbingers of a new age, as brave patriots who put before the nation ideals worth fighting for.

Sri Aurobindo, then in his early thirties, became the fascination and the object of adoration of the masses. No leader in the history of Congress had ever known such enthusiastic receptions as he received wherever he went. A year later, when he was being tried in the historic Alipore Conspiracy Case, the Government Counsel, Mr. Eardley Norton, who was desperately trying to prove that Sri Aurobindo was guilty, observed with anguish :

> "Aurobindo was treated with the reverence of a king wherever he had gone. As a matter of fact he was regarded as the leader not merely of Bengal but of the whole country."

In 1908, Calcutta was not so much crowded with people and buildings as it is today. There were many quiet spots inside the city. One such spot was the Maniktolla garden. It had a house

inside it, surrounded by trees and there was a pond beside the house surrounded by bushes.

On the 22nd of May, 1908, it was still dark when a large number of policemen swooped down on the garden. They acted briskly. Soon the young immates of the house, abruptly and rudely awakened from their sleep, were driven to the police station. They had been arrested.

The police claimed that they had found many incriminating things such as materials for making bombs and note-book describing how to make them.

While the raid on the garden was in full swing, another police party had surrounded a house at the Grey Street. That was the residence of Sri Aurobindo. Barindra Kumar, who had been arrested along with his friends at the garden, was Sri Aurobindo's younger brother.

Here too the police claimed that they had discovered many 'dangerous' materials. In due course, however, these dangerous materials were found to be nothing more than some letters of Sri Aurobindo written to his wife and a lump of dry mud. Somebody had collected the mud from the Ganges at Dakshineshwar where Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa had lived, considering the earth sacred.

Sri Aurobindo did not know most of the young men who were arrested. It is not possible to say how much he knew about their activities. The Government was also not sure of his link with the arrested youths. But to implicate him and how and at any cost was the motive of the rulers.

The Government was afraid of Sri Aurobindo's growing popularity, his magnificent, godly personality which attracted innumerable youths to him. He never spoke much, but whatever he said was accepted by his followers as sacred, almost as the last word of any issue. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose came to Calcutta when Sri Aurobindo had already left the political scene. But Netaji recollects :

> "When I came to Calcutta in 1913, Aurobindo was already a legendary figure. Rarely have I seen people speak of a leader with such rapturous enthusiasm and many were the anecdotes of this great man, some of them probably true, which travelled from mouth to mouth."

So, the rulers had grown determined to check Sri Aurobindo's influence.

After their arrest, Sri Aurobindo and the others were first produced in the Court of Alipore District Magistrate. Then the case was sent upto the Alipore Sessions Court.

The judge was Mr. Beachcroft. He had been Sri Aurobindo's class-mate at Cambridge. He was a brilliant student, of course next to Sri Aurobindo !

While the trial was in progress, dramatic events took place in a series. One of the accused had turned approver. In the broad daylight, inside the prison, he was shot dead by two young men who knew well that they would be consequently hanged. When asked where they got the revolvers, they replied. "Khudiram's spirit gave them to us." The officer who had caught Prafulla Chaki was killed and the killer was never discovered. Public Prosecutor, Biswas, an able assistant of the Counsel for the Crown Barrister Norton, was shot dead on the stairs of the court by a young man who forefeited his life in return at the gallows.

Norton writes, "In the Sessions Court the accused were placed behind a network of wire, police with fixed bayonets stood on guard throughout the room, and I had a five-chambered loaded revolver lying on my brief thoughout the trial. The Government, regarding me, I presume, as a valuable investment in cnnsequence of the fees that had been paid me, insisted I should personally be guarded. Thereafter I was surrounded at my house and on my drives to Court by stalwart C.I.D. officers who struck one as being more dangerous with their loaded revolvers to myself than my prospective assailants."

(The prosecution case against Sri Aurobindo fatted. On his acquittal, he launched two papers. *Dharma* and the *Karmayogin*. The rulers, however, were eager to deport him. By the time they framed up another case and went to arrest him, Sri Aurobindo was missing. A heated debate in the House of Commons ensured, Sir Ramsay MacDonald and Keir Hardie accusing the Lord Asquith Ministry of harassing Sri Aurobindo. Lord Minto, the Governor-General was still insisting on deporting Sri Aurobindo and Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India was dissuading him from doing

so, when at last news flashed that Sri Aurobindo had reached the French Colony of Pondicherry in his seer-vision, he knew India's freedom to be a *fait accompli*. He was out for pastures new—to explore the destiny of man in terms spiritual).

# 63

## SRI AUROBINDO

K.C. VARADACHARI

The philosophy and the personality of Sri Aurobindo have been before the world-public for well nigh quarter of a century. They have revealed meaning to us—the goal towards which mankind has been moving. That goal is the perfection of the individual in the context of world purpose. The dignity of the human individual which has received such great emphasis and attention in recent times has a source and goal other than the human individual as we know him in the history of human development. Man is seeking ends of perfection and peace, of unity and unifiedness, of values and worthinesses. The great ideals of mankind were stated again and again by the mystics on the one hand and perfectionists on the other. There have been men who have sought immortality in the physical body and held this to be the goal to be aimed at—alchemists and siddhas have been many. Evolutionists have added their own strength to this belief—mankind is to be transcended and the goal of evolution is the beyond-man, or the Superman. Man is the link towards godhood. The earth itself is the place for the making of the gods. The ideals of liberty for man, equality of all men, and the fraternity of all have been adumbrated by the politicians following on the footsteps of religious mysticism. But how man himself could achieve these ideals or realise them has been the problem.

Religious ideals seem to demand the climate of renunciation of all life-values, such as wealth, power and comfort. Everywhere

the saints preferred to go to the desert and attain their liberation as well as their communion with God or the Absolute of Religion. This is the wisdom (*viveka*) that supports the renunciation (*vairagya*) and liberates from the bondage of the world, its fears and terrors and sorrows. But political life as well as ethical life demand the actualisation of the ideals in the context of the society —human society. Political ideals and religious ideals seem to need each other and in fact we have the great attempts to bring down the ideals of religion into the context of political and social life, this being thought of as the bringing down of the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. A student of political history can discern this continuous process by which the mystico—religious tradition has attempted to influence and modify the political and social life of peoples. The relation between the Church and the State has been characterised by unity, conflict and dictatorship of one or the other. There is however no solution to their problems—intractable is the one word by which their relationship could be characterised. This conflict could not be got over in any region of the globe. Modern studies of history on the global scale as well as on the anthropological scale have only confirmed the law of inevitable conflict between the religious ideals and the political and social ideals. The reason has been shown to be the notion of power—its essential dialectic as well as its essential *nisus* towards individuality. Humane efforts to solve these tensions with the help of the reason which seeks unity and harmony of ethical and religious interests with the political power-interests have borne fruit undoubtedly in the several constitutions drafted. But the ideals seems to be receding all the while. Man has come to a point where something more than legalistic devices of mutual control of checks and balances is necessary to secure smooth social functioning. The entry of the economic into the field of politics boded the disappearance of the religious—the conflict finally had become the conflict between the economic (materialistic) ideals of equality and liberty and the religious (spiritual) ideals of equality, liberty and fraternity.

We are today striving to solve this conflict, easy enough as it should be because linguistically the ideals seem to be the same for the materialist and the spiritualist (idealist). This, however, is not possible for we find today that the materialists themselves are betraying their inevitable tendency to disintegrate into sects

and factions even as the religious institutions—the materialistic products of religious aspirations have tended to divide and subdivide themselves. As Sri Aurobindo states this is the flaw of the materialistic mind—of our intellect itself—which is following the curve of matter. So any attempt to solve the present conflict between the materialist and spiritual factors should have to seek the aid of a higher-than-intellect—namely, intuition and supermind. Man's rationality which has been such a great help for his evolution has come to that point where it has to become transformed into a higher faculty or be substituted by it. Surely this appears to be almost an expression of a deep pessimism about the power of our reason and our consciousness. Many have been and are the critics who think that this call to a higher-than-reason is a betrayal of a most faithful ally and servant in our evolutionary struggle. These critics identify the intellect with man and his dignity and resolutely refuse to take the help of the more stable and satisfying function and power within man, that deeper and profoundly unifying force which lies within man himself, namely, the divine insight and inspiration which formulated in such blazing light the basic call to universal harmony and peace through the practice of fraternity, from which flow equality of opportunity and liberty of individual development.

Today we are convinced that the deep and abiding function or power of our consciousness to seek ideals owes its strength to the Consciousness above it. It is cosmic consciousness, integral vision, and unifying insight. The utilisation of this consciousness beyond our reason and intellect is the necessity. The discovery of this instrument of being is our present urgent concern. Its truth-nature has been testified to by scores of saints and prophets all the world over. Instead of depending on the divisive intellect or reason that creates more problems than it solves and is today at the service of lower instincts which are still more divisive, man must seek out this higher-than-intellect, the supermind, to solve his problems of living being.

The ideal of human unity can be realised only when men begin to work in and through the higher-than-mind-and-intellect in all their work. Just as philosophers began by distrusting their senses and depended on their reason for determining the nature of truth or truth itself and reality, so too man has to realise more and more that no less that the senses the intellect does delude and

creat more illusory problems and solutions. The world of *maya* is not only sovereignty ruled by sense but by intellect as well. Ignorance not only persists in the realms of intellectual thought but deepens out the shadows of illusion. As the Ishopanishad states knowledge leads to greater darkness as it were—*tato bhuyaiva te vidyayagm ratah*—.

The ancient thinkers had acknowledged the ultimate superiority of the Revelational knowledge contained in the Scriptures, especially the Veda in India. Its paramount purpose was to reveal the Ultimate Reality in its eternal or true nature and also to help the attainment of freedom from death and immortality. These goals are the ultimate goals of man, everywhere. Sri Aurobindo acknowledges this primacy and sovereignty of the *apta-vacana* or Veda. But what he really has done in modern times is to reveal that this mode of apprehension of Reality as it is in itself is not to be the peculiar and unique possession of saints but of all aspiring humanity. It is something that has to be sought after seriously. Even as the *elan* or survival through adaptation to the challenging environment has produced the evolutionary process upto man, it is possible to urge mankind itself onward by striving after this new organon or instrument to transcend man. Human survival is possible only through this seeking of the higher-than-mind, to be divinised entirely in all one's parts. Not only should man be remade but also transformed into divine nature.

The dynamics of the process is Yoga through internal surrender or total dedication to the supermind or God Himself. This union with God through surrender and total offering of oneself immediately makes for the descent of this superconscious or supramental force into one's nature and gradually begins to transform him. Similarly, it brings about dynamic changes in the environment and relations through the unifying quality of its action. May be co-operation may be said to get first emphasis against competitive approach, peaceful co-existence or tolerance might replace fanaticism and bigotry and warfare. But this is undoubtedly due to the already present operation of the higher type consciousness through the mental being—thanks to the work of the ancient seers and sages. The total change is called for today because of the increased knowledge of science and the discoveries made by man. These too are due to the operations of the higher-than-intellect consciousness as even the scientists have stated.

Intuition or the inventive unconsciousness, or what you will, has made for the leaps in our knowledge and techniques. The Religious would call it the act of grace of God, whereas the materialist would affirm that it is due to insight and intuition—natural operations of mind itself in its confrontation of matter and situation. May be even the mind itself is the operation of matter or otherwise. In any case in the fields of science intuition or the higher minds has been continuously operative. The stretch of this operation into the fields of human behaviour or sociology would lead to formation of new associations or units of social organization which would abolish the lower-type associations of the beehive and ant-hill, and primitive clan and social colour-units or economic units or functional units or castes or patterns of culture. If at first the higher type associations seem to break up the lower ones it is only to erect a more dynamic and universal union. Thus at the beginning, there was the rise of religions which sought unification of all mankind under the ideology or ritual of one creed or church. However, this religious approach to the whole of mankind helped only to some extent. The unification of man took several steps and directions, and history is replace with the stories of these religious, political, national, sectional, unions or sects whose rivalry and struggle have littered it. Sri Aurobindo in his two seminal works *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* has canvassed this large area brilliantly. The progress of man however has nevertheless been maintained. The ideal has been often dimmed but never completely abolished from man's vision. Seers and saints, warriors of knowledge have striven to untarnish and uncover the ideal to man, so that he may be aware of his large destiny. A world union is undoubtedly our goal, but it cannot be achieved either by the consuming zeal of baptismal religions or economic socialism such as communism that drives out the individual. It must be known that the real strength of communism is its drive towards human worth and dignity of being for himself it and through the society. Nationalism, itself a unity, becomes at a later stage an obstacle to world unity. Racialism is itself confronting a new dimension of human relationship. Only the souls in all starta and all religions and cultures who have listened to the call of the Superman and partaken of the supramental activity can forge the unity of man in Godhood, brotherhood and freedom. Our techniques of international co-operation in all fields are today

informed unconsciously by the supramental goals and this itself is due to the descent of the supramental nature into every man awakened or unawakened to its ingression.

Sri Aurobindo chanted this great mantra of the Superman and held out the hope of a world-union through divine consciousness that is love or true fraternity and sharing. It is our duty to remember Him with gratitude on this day of our political and national and spiritual freedom.

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# SRI AUROBINDO ON THE POETRY OF THE FUTURE

SHRI KRISHNA PRASAD

## I

The *Future Poetry* of Sri Aurobindo is as much a work of major and far-reaching importance in the field of literary criticism as *The Life Divine* is in the realm of philosophy, or *The Human Cycle* is in the domain of sociology. As the title indicates, it gives us an idea of the poetry, destined to be written in future. Though Sri Aurobindo says with his characteristic modesty that "To attempt to presage the future turn or development of mind or life in any of its fields is always a hazardous occupation,"[1] yet we may take it that when he has undertaken, as in this book, to give us a glimpse of the future form and expression of poetry, it is with a clear and comprehensive vision of the spiritual and not merely imaginative mind that he would do it. As such, one is hardly aware of any streak of doubting hesitancy or fumbling uncertainty or, on the contrary, any tendency towards an exaggerated flight of some over-colourful imagination, while going through the pages of the book. It is true, as he says again, that "life and mind are not, like physical Nature which runs in precise mechanical grooves," these beings "more mobile and freer powers," and "It is, therfore, impossible to predict what the poetry of the future will actually be like."[2] All that he would attempt to do in the circumstances is "to distinguish for oneself some possibilities that lie

before the poetic mind of the race and to figure what it can achieve if it chooses to follow out certain great openings which the genius of recent and contemporary poets has made free to us."[3] But what will be the actual or precise forms and features, or lines of movement, of that poetry, Sri Aurobindo would not determine with any logical rigidity of thought or scientific or, for the matter of that, poetic bent of mind, though the general picture of the future is clear and vivid enough in his critical vision. Better it is that the "path" which the poetic mind of the future "will actually choose to tread," or the "new heights" it will seek to scale are left "for its own yet undecided decision."[4]

This had been stated in the second decade of this century when *The Future Poetry* was being published in The *Arya* from Pondicherry as a series of essays from 15-12-1917 to 15-7-1920. At that time Sri Aurobindo was hardly in actual touch with the contemporary English or, for the matter of that, Western poets and poetic trends. As far as English poetry was concerned, it was the time when the Georgian movement had reached the state of decadence and the "modernist" movement under the leadership of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot had not yet made its influence felt. And it was not long afterwards that sensitive critical minds had begun to declare that poetry mattered little to the modern world or that the age of poetry was gone. Despite the absence of any actual personal contact with what happening in the literary world of contemporary Europe, he felt, as if through some unerring critical intuition, the very pulse of that world and raised the question with an unambiguous clarity as well as the determination to face it squarely : are we in for poetic decadence or new birth ?

To state the truth, this still remains a crucial question of our times. And it is a question which concerns not merely poetry and literature and art but philosophy, religion, thought and culture in general, nay, our very life and civilisation. It is a question vital to the future of mankind itself. However, we are concerned here with the future of poetry alone. There are people, says Sri Aurobindo, who think that ". . . since the modern mind is increasingly scientific and less and less poetically and aesthetically imaginative, poetry must necessarily decline and give place to science,—for much the same reason, in fact, for which philosophy replaced poetry in Greece." On the other hand, there are others

who suggest that "... the poetic mind might become more positive and make use of the materials of science or might undertake a more intellectual though always poetic criticism of life and might fill the place of philosophy and religion."[6] But this means more or less the same thing, even "a more protracted decadence," for it equally means "a deviation from the true law of aesthetic creation." The large fact is that "The pure intellect cannot create poetry. The inspired or imaginative reason does indeed play an important, sometimes a leading part, but even that can only be a support or an influence ... it is the spirit within and not the mind without that is the fount of poetry."[7] However, Sri Aurobindo does not think that we are heading towards only more and more of intellectualism, more and more of science. On the contrary, "... the human intelligence seems on the verge of an attempt to rise through the intellectual into an intuitive mentality; it is no longer content to regard the intellect and the world of positive fact as all or the intellectual reason as a sufficient mediator between life and the spirit, but is beginning to perceive that there is a spiritual mind which can admit us to a greater and more comprehensive vision .... A first opening out to this new way of seeing is the sense of the work of Whitman and Carpenter ... of Tagore and Yeats and A.E., of Meredith and some others of the English poets."[8] Sri Aurobindo is aware that there are critics who regard this tendency as only "... another sign of decadence; they see in it a morbid brilliance, a phosphorescence of decay."[9] He also admits that "There is much that is morbid, perverse or unsound in some recent poetry."[10] But then he would like us also to see that "... this comes from an artificial prolongation of the past or a temporary mixed straining, it does not belong to that element in the new poetry which escapes from it and turns firmly to the things of the future."[11] His own opinion is that decadence sets in "... when the poetic mind settles irretrievably into a clumsy and artificial repetition of past forms and conventions or can only escape from them into scholastic or aesthetic prettiness or extravagance. But an age which brings in large and new vital and spiritual truths, truths of our beings, truths of the self of man and the inner self of Nature and opens vast untrod ranges to sight and imagination, is not likely to be an age of decadence, and a poetry which voices these things ... is not likely to be a poetry of decadence."[12]

Sri Aurobindo has, therefore, no doubt in his mind that poetry is not heading towards decadence. On the contrary, it is going to be written with a newly developing "intuitive mentality," resulting in "a greater and more comprehensive vision," "a luminous totality." Since the age breaking upon us will, as years pass by, more and more aim at ". . . neither materialism nor an intuitive vitalism nor a remote detached spirituality, but a harmonious and luminous totality or man's being,"[13] we may safely presume that to the poetry of this new age " . . . the whole field of existence will be open for its subject, God and Nature and man and all the worlds, the field of the finite and the infinite. It is not a close, even a high close and ending in this or any field that the future offers to us, but a new and higher evolution, a second and greater birth of all man's powers and his being and action and creation."[14]

II

Believing, as he does, in the truth of evolution, it is no wonder if Sri Aurobindo relates the various phases of the evolution of Western poetry with those of the evolution of man himself. Man's poetry is shown to be very closely linked with the level of consciousness and life and culture attained by him at the time. In this connection, Sri Aurobindo gives us a theory of poetry which is truly remarkable for both its novelty and profundity. He remarks : ". . . poetry is a psycholigical phenomenon, the poetic impulse a highly charged force of expression of the mind and soul of man, and therefore in trying to follow out its line of evolution it is the development of the psychological motive and power, it is the kind of feeling, vision, mentality which is seeking in it for its word and idea and form of beauty and it is the power of the soul through which it finds expression or the level of mind from which it speaks which we must distinguish to get a right idea of the progress of poetry. All else is subsidiary, variations of rhythm, language, structure; they are the form, the vehicle; they derive subtly and get their character and meaning from the psychological power and the fundamental motive."[15] It is self-evident, therefore, that "If poetry is a highly-charged power of aesthetic expression of the soul of man, it must follow in its course of evolution the development of that soul."[16] And then follows a very felicitous and picturesque description of the evolution of the

soul of man by Sri Aurobindo. He deals with this favourite subject of his at various places both in prose and poetry but the beauty is that every time the expression or treatment is fresh, striking and delightfully readable and sound. The same thrill of novel charm we get here too; and there is, in addition, the *rasa* of poetic beauty which good critical prose can were like an easy, natural garment in the heat of creative intensity. The passage is long but it deserves to be quoted almost in full :

"I put it that from this point of view the soul of man like the soul of Nature can be regarded as an unfolding of the spirit in the material world. Our unfolding has its roots in the soil of the physical life; its growth shoots up and out in many directions in the stalk and branches of the vital being; it puts forth the opulence of the buds, of mind and there, nestling in the luxuriant leaves of mind and above it, out from the spirit which was concealed in the whole process must blosssom the free and infinite soul of man, the hundred-petalled rose of God. Man ideed, unlike other forms of being in terrestrial Nature, though rooted in body, proceeds by the mind and all that is characteristic of him belongs to the wonderful play of mind taking up physiculity and life and developing and enriching its gains till it can exceed itself and become a spiritual mind, the divine Mind in man. He turns first his view on the outward physical world and on his own life of outward action and concentrates on that or throws into its mould his life-suggestions, his thought, his religious idea, and, if he arrives at some vision of an inner spiritual truth, he puts even that into forms and figures of the physical life and physical Nature.* Poetry at a certain stage or of a certain kind expresses this turn of the human mentality in word and in form of beauty. It can reach great heights in this kind of mental mould, can see the physical forms of the gods, lift to a certain greatness by its vision and disclose a divine quality in even the most obvious, material and outward being and action of man; and in this type we have Homer. Arrived to greater depth of living . . . man begins to feel more sensitively the passion and power of life, its joy and pain, its wonder and terror and beauty and romance, to turn everything into moved thought and sentiment and sensation of the life-soul, the desire-soul in him which first forces itself on his

*As in the hymns of the Vedic Rishis.

introspection when he begins to go inward. Poetry too takes this turn, rises and deepens to a new kind of greatness; and at the summit in this kind we have Shakespeare."[17] However, the vital way of seeing and creating, in which "thought is involved in life," cannot permanently satisfy the mental being that is man, and he outgrows this stage in order to get "a clear detached idea" of the passion, the emotion, "the thought-suggestions of life" and "see with the calm eye of his reason," and " . . . probe, analyse, get at the law and cause and general and particular rule of himself and Nature."[18] And poetry, too, responds to this mental growth in man and " . . . takes on the lucid, restrained, intellectual and ideal classic form, in which high or strong ideas govern and develop the presentation of life and thought."[19] And herein, according to Sri Aurobindo, lies the greatness of the Greek and Latin poets. But this is not the end of the intellectual development of either man and his poetry, for "afterwards the intelligence sets more comprehensively to work, opens itself to all manner of the possibilities of truth . . . an endless succession of pregnant generalisations. This is the type of modern intellectualism."[20] The poetry which arises out of this phase of intellectual growth of man is "full of a teeming many-sided poetic ideation," blends "the classical and romantic motives" and combines together " . . . the realistic, aesthetic, impressionist, idealistic ways of seeing and thinking, makes many experiments and combinations, passes through many phases."[21] In such a situation neither "the true classic form" nor the "pure and genuine remanticism of the life-spirit" is possible, and all attempts to return to either of these are apt to fail. The truth, according to Sri Aurobindo, is that "The poetry of an age of many-sided intellectualism can live only by its many-sidedness and by making everything as it comes a new material for the aesthetic creations of the observing, thinking, constructing intelligence."[22]

The future of poetry is, thus, according to this view, interlinked with the future phase of modern man's consciousness and culture. Sri Aurobindo's sound spiritual optimism leads him to feel that the future of both is bright enough. There many be some among us who may not share his optimism and may hold the view that our civilization and art and literature and thought are all doomed to reach or have already reached a dead end, since mankind cannot go any further. Indeed, it cannot go any

further if it continues to cling like a leech to its present-day limited, intellect-bound mentality but if its consciousness can undergo a real spiritual change, bringing about a radical transformation of his whole nature and life, his physicality, vitality and mentality, definite signs of which are increasingly emerging both in the East and the West, modern man need not live under the fear of complete annihilation. The only thing needed is the desire to exceed himself, at first, internally, spiritually and then, with the help and under the guidance of this inner change, to transcend all those limits which hamper the growth of his external life and action.

Sri Aurobindo, on his part, has tried to indicate and stress in so many ways and through so many of his writings, with all the power of the certitude of seer-vision, the belief that humanity is again moving towards a new intuitive mentality and the age of the spirit after passing through the cycles of physical, vital and intellectual or rational modes of thinking and living. If we accept this belief—and there is no reason why we should not—, it is clear he says, that it is to "... something very like the effort which was the soul of the Vedic or at least the Vedantic mind that we almost appear to be on the point of turning back in the circle of our course. Now that we have seen minutely what is the material reality of the world in which we live and have some knowledge of the vital reality of the Force from which we spring, we are at last beginning to seek again for the spiritual reality of that which we and all things are."[23] But there will be, he says, quite a substantial difference between our new vision of the spiritual reality and the one which obtained in the old times. In the old days, the spiritual godheads of Truth, Freedom, Unity, Love, Beauty, Delight, Harmony, etc., were "... mysteries, which men left to the few, to the initiates and by so leaving them lost sight of them in the end, but the endeavour of this new mind is to reveal, to divulge and to bring near to our comprehension all mysteries ... and this turn towards an open realisation may well lead to an age in which man as a race will try to live in a greater Truth than has yet governed our kind ... His creation too will then be moved by another spirit and cast on other lines."[24]

If all this takes place even to some definite extent, poetry may recover its old hieratic prestige and power. Of course, quite a good deal of it will continue to be written along the old lines and in accordance with the old commoner aesthetic motives, but what

is hopeful and more than probable is that conditions will be there for the emergence of "the poet who is also a Rishi," "the poet-seer and seer-creator." ". . . master singers of Truth, hierophants and magicians of a diviner and more universal beauty."[25] As a matter of fact, "there is already the commencement," Sri Aurobindo says, of such a possibility," . . . the conscious effort of Whitman, the tone of Carpenter, the significance of the poetry of A.E., the rapid immediate fame of Tagore are its first signs."[26] The poet is already becoming the Rishi. "Mankind satiated with the levels is turning its face once more towards the heights, and the poetic voices that will lead us thither with song will be among the high seer voices."[27] We are not to forget that he said this in the early decades of this century when the name of Tagore was spreading all over the world and a new ferment of thought and consciousness had begun to charge the face of things and life, both in the East and the West, including the face of literature and art.

What is more, this new poetry of the furture, Sri Aurobindo emphasised, will more and more reveal to us that ". . . the spirit and life are not incompatible, but rather a greater power of the spirit brings a greater power of life."[28] Reminiscent almost of Matthew Arnold but with an entirely new outlook and vision Sri Aurobindo declared that, while philosophy often lost itself in abstractions and religion turned to "an intolerant other-worldliness," the function of poetry had always been to bring about a union between ". . . the immaterial and the concrete, the spirit and life"[29] and this function of poetry, he held with a prophetic certitude, would gain in strength and intensity in the years to come.

The new poetry, he said, would also deepen our experience of beauty and delight by increasingly revealing to us how these things are really spiritual in origin and purpose. He reminded us the ". . . the ancient Indian idea is absolutely true that delight, Ananda, is the inmost expressive and creative nature of the free self because it is the very essence of the orginal being of there Spirit,"[30] and that ". . . the highest kinds of delight and beauty are those which are one with the highest Truth, the perfection of life and the purest and fullest joy of the self-revealing Spirit."[31] Thus, this poetry will seek to provide us with something like " . . . a supreme harmony of five eternal powers, Truth, Beauty,

Delight, Life and the Spirit"[32] in a manner unattempted and unrealised before. And its mode of apprehension of these things will be predominantly intuitive and psychic and not merely vitally and intellectually imaginative. As he says : "It will be first and most a poetry of the intuitive reason, the intuitive senses, the intuitive delight-soul in us, getting from this enhanced source of inspiration a more sovereign poetic enthusiasm and ecstasy, and then, it may even be, rise towards a still greater power of revelation nearer to the direct vision and word of the Overmind from which all the creative inspirations come."[33] But this does not mean that it will be something so high and remote and intangible that we of the earth cannot feel at home in it. On the contrary, it will not only seek to make ". . . the highest things near, close and visible"[34] but " . . . sing greatly and beautifully of all that has been sung, all that we are from outward body to very God and Self, of the finite and the infinite, the transient and the Eternal, . . . with a new reconciling and fusing vision that will make them other to us than they have been even when yet the same."[35] It will be, thus, in the best possible sense both original and traditional, individual and universal, classical and romantic, realistic and idealistic.

III

Let us now note what changes Sri Aurobindo foresees in the form and language of this poetry. Like several critics of today Sri Aurobindo also believes that "a change in the spirit of poetry must necessarily bring with it a change of its forms. . ."[36] However, he thinks that "the opening of the creative mind into an intuitive and revelatory poetry need not of itself compel a revolution and total breaking up of the old forms and a creation of altogether new moulds; it may. . .be effected for the most part by an opening up of new potentialities in old instruments and a subtle inner change of their character."[37] But remoulding of the old instruments may not prove quite sufficient in course of time, and it is more than probable that in order to embody the changed vision fully and satisfactorily there may take place "a considerable departure in all the main provinces of poetic creation, the lyric, the drama, the narrative or epic."[38]

According to Sri Aurobindo, it is the lyrical impulse which

is "the original and spontaneous creator of the poetic form, song the first discovery of the possibility of a higher because a rhythmic intensity of self-expression."[39] What is more, the lyrical spirit is capable of adapting itself to various modes of expression. It may find itself quite at home in the "clear spontaneities of song or else it may prefer to weight its steps with thought and turn to a meditative movement or, great-winged, assume an epic elevation, or lyricise the successive moments of an action, or utter the responses of heart to heart, mind to mind, soul to soul, move between suggestions and counter-suggestions of mood and idea and feeling and devise a lyrical seed or concentration of drama."[40] As such, it is "the widest in range" and "most flexible in form and motive of all the poetic kinds,"[41] and, therefore, it is there that "a new spirit in poetry is likely to become aware of itself and feel out for its right ways of expression. . .before it works out victoriously its greater motion or ampler figures in narrative and drama."[42] And "the turn to a more direct self-expression of the spirit must find out its way first by the emergence of a new kind of lyrical sincerity which is neither the directness of the surface life emotions nor the moved truth of the thought mind seizing or observing the emotion and bringing out its thought significances. There are in fact only two pure and absolute sincerities here, the power of the native intuition of itself by life which has for its result a direct and obvious identity of the thing felt and its expression, and the power of identity of the spirit when it takes up thought and feeling and life and makes them one with some inmost absolute truth of their and our existence. . . It is, therefore, a transition from the lyricism of life weighted by the stresses of thought to the lyricism of the inmost spirit which uses but is beyond thought that has to be made."[43]

Above all, what Sri Aurobindo would have us remember in this connection is that "the essential and decisive step of the future art of poetry will perhaps be to discover that it is not the form which either fixes or reveals the spirit but the spirit which makes out of itself the form and the word. . . .Natures creates perfectly because she creates directly out of life and is not intellectually self-conscious, the spirit well create perfectly because it creates directly out of self and is spontaneously supra-intellectually all-conscious."[44] The fact being so, "the decisive revealing lyrical outburst must come when the poet has learnt to live creatively

only in the inmost spiritual sight and identity of his own self with the self of his objects and images and to sing only from the deepest spiritual emotion."[45] And in the long-run, the poet will realise that the poetry which is born from the inmost spirit cannot bind him to any "narrow theory of an intellectual art principle,"[46] for it is the creation at will "according to the truth of the spirit's absolute moments."[47] The spirit itself will enable him "to discover infinite possibilities of new spiritual measure and intonation in time-old lyrical rhythms or to find a new principle of rhythm and structure."[48]

The dramatic motive and form will also undergo a similar spiritual change. Hitherto we have had "the drama of life, whether presenting only vivid outsides and significant incidents and morals and manners or expressive of the life-soul and its workings in event and character and passion, and the drama of the idea or, more vitally, of the idea-power that is made to work itself out in the life movement. . .use the character and the passion for its instruments and at its highest tension appear as an agent of the conflict of ideal forces that produce the more lofty tragedies of human action."[49] But the drama of the future "will differ from the romantic play or tragedy because the thing which dramatic speech will represent will be something more internal than the life soul and its brilliant pageant of passion and character. . . .the movement that will throughout occupy the mind will be the procession of the soul phases or the turns of the soul action : the character will not be mistaken for the person, but accepted as only an inner life notation of the spirit : the passions, which have hitherto been prominently brought forward as the central stuff of the drama, will be reduced to their proper place as indicative colour and waves on the stream of spiritual self-revelation."[50] Also, "the drama will be no longer an interpretation of Fate or self-acting Karma or of the simple or complex natural entanglements of the human life-movement, but a revelation of the Soul as its own fate and determiner of its life and its Karma and behind it of the powers and the movements of the spirit in the universe."[51] Nor will it be limited "either by any old or new formal convention, but transmute old moulds and invent others and arrange according to the truth of its vision its acts and the evolution of its dramatic process or the refrain of its lyrical or the march of its epic motive."[52]

Similarly, the epic and other narrative forms of poetry will undergo a deeper change. Hitherto the poetical narrative has "a mental and moral significance at the basis with the story at its occasion or form of its presentation."[53] It will now be replaced by "a soul significance as the real substance," and "the action will not be there for its external surface interest but as a vital indication of the significance."[54] In place of the external narrative, there will be what Sri Aurobindo calls "an intensive narrative, intensive in simplicity or in richness of significant shades, tones and colours."[55] Altogether, "the same governing vision will be there as in lyric and drama; the method of development will alone be different according to the necessities of the more diffused, circumstanced and outwardly processive form which is proper to narrative."[56]

As to the epic, it is sometimes asserted, says Sri Aurobindo, that it is "solely proper to primitive ages when the freshness of life made a story of large and simple action of supreme interest to the youthful mind of humanity, the literary epic an artificial prolongation by an intellectual age and a genuine epic potery no longer possible now or in the future."[57] As Sri Aurobindo himself is the author of a massive epic written with a wholly intuitive and revelatory consciousness of this and the other worlds, he cannot subscribe to such a view and is justified in denying its validity. His own view of the matter is that the epic "need not necessarily be a vigorous presentation of external action."[58] On the contrary, "the divinely appointed creation of Rome, the struggle of the principle of good and evil as presented in the great Indian poems, the pageant of the centuries or the journey of the seer through the three worlds beyond us are as fit themes as primitive war and adventure for the imagination of the epic creator. The epics of the soul most inwardly seen as they will be by an intuitive poetry, are his greatest possible subject, and it is this supreme kind that we shall expect from some profound and mighty voice of the future."[59] Above all, it will "reveal from the highest pinnacle and with the largest field of vision the destiny of the human spirit and the presence and ways and purpose of the Divinity in man and the universe."[60]

## IV

It is not only the forms and frames of poetry which will

undergo a deep change under the impact of the spiritual consciousness and power but also its word and rhythmic movement. As a matter of fact, Sri Aurobindo would have us remember that "the poetic word is a vehicle of the spirit," itself; it is "the chosen medium of the soul's self-expression,"[61] and, therefore, "any profound modification of the inner habit of the soul, its thought atmosphere, its way of seeing, its type of feeling,. . .must reflect itself in a corresponding modification. . . inner greatening and deepening of the word which it has to use."[62] "The old habits of speech", he continues to say, "cannot contain the new spirit and must either enlarge and deepen themselves and undergo a transformation or else be broken up and make way for another figure."[63] Even much of serious modernist poetry clearly suggests that the governing spirit of the change overtaking human art and literature and thought "is a turn to a more intimate and directly or fully intuitive speech and rhythm."[64] But "the thing is in itself so subtle that it can better be indicated than analysed, adequately described or made precise to the intelligence."[65] Moreover, "all poetry except that of the most outward kind. . .is in its inmost inspiration and character intuitive more a creation of the vision and feeling than of the intelligence"[66] and so "the poet has to do much more than to offer a precise, a harmonious or a forcefully presented idea to the intelligence : he has to give a breath of life to the word and for that must find out and make full use of its potential power of living suggestion. . . .As in the Vedic theory the Spirit was supposed to create the worlds by the Word, so the poet brings into being in himself and us by his creative word fragmentarily or largely. . .an inner word of beings, objects and experiences."[67] But then "all creation is a mystery in its secret of inmost process and it is only at best the most outward or mechanical part of it which admits analysis; the creative faculty of the poetic mind is no exception. The poet is a magician who hardly knows the secret of his own spell; even the part taken by the consciously critical or constructive mind is less intellectual than intuitive; he creates by an afflatus of spiritual power of which his mind is the channel and instrument and the appreciation of it in himself and others comes not by an intellectual judgment but by a spiritual feeling."[68] And it is this intuitive spiritual feeling which will really guide him in the choice of his words, will tell him whether the word that comes to him is the "adequate" or

"effective" or "illuminative" or "inspired" or "inevitable" utterance of his vision.

These, in fact, are the different poetic styles in keeping with the different grades of perfection in poetry which Sri Aurobindo has in view : the adequate, the effective, the illuminative, the inspired and the inevitable. One may no doubt try to explain, analyse and illustrate these different styles, as he does himself to the best of his capacity, but his warning that "these are things which one has to learn to feel, one can't analyse"[69] no less holds good. Subject to this qualification, we may cast a glance here at these different styles as explained and illustrated by him in the pages of *The Future Poetry*, so that we are able to see for ourselves which of these poetic styles are likely to prevail most with the poets of the future. But in order to full justice to the subject, Sri Aurobindo tries first to indicate the deeper psychological truth underlying human speech itself, particularly his poetic utterance. He says that if we look at the words we use in speech in their inmost psychological and not only at their external aspect, we shall see that "what constitutes speech and gives it its life and appeal and significance is a subtle conscious force which informs and is the soul of the body of sound : it is a super-conscient Nature-Force raising its material out of our sub-conscience. . . . It is this Force, this Shakti to which the old Vedic thinkers gave the name of Vak, the goddess of creative speech, and the Tantric psychists supposed that this Power acts in us through different subtle nervous centres on higher and higher levels of its force and that thus the word has a graduation of its expressive powers of truth and vision."[70] And the fundamental difference between ordinary speech and poetic speech lies, broadly speaking, in this that the former proceeds from and appeals to the conceiving intelligence while it is the seeing mind that is the master of poetic utterance."[71] In this sense, too, therefore, the poet is the seer; he sees through his word the form and image and movement of his experience.

## V

But this "seeing speech" is of different grades of expression in keeping with the different grades of consciousness and vision. The first and simplest power "is limited to a clear poetic adequacy and at its lowest difficult to distinguish from prose

statement except by its more compact and vivid force of presentation and the subtle difference made by the rhythm which brings in a living appeal and adds something of an emotional and sensational nearness to what would otherwise be little more than an intellectual expression."[72] The following couplet of Dryden, for example, as quoted by him,

Whatever he did was done with so much ease,
In him alone 'twas natural to please,

may be taken to be a good example of it. Here the manner of expression is one of "terse prose statement, but made just poetical by a certain life and vividness and a rhythmic suggestion. . .just sufficient to make it thought felt and not merely presented to the conception."[73]

But there may be in this adequate style "a higher and much finer quality"[74] with "the power to make us not only conceive adequately, but see the object or idea in a certain temperate lucidity of vision."[75] Quoting the following verses of Wordsworth which may be taken to be a good illustration of this "higher" manner of the adequate style :

"The waves beside them danced, but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee :
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company",

he says that the thing sought to be described here is something "seen and lived within us" and awakens "a satisfied soul response." The style has, therefore, "the native action of the seeing word and bears the stamp of a spiritual sincerity greater, profounder, more beautiful than that of the intelligence."[76]

The effective poetic style "tries to go beyond this fine and perfect adequacy in its intensities, attempts a more rich or a more powerful expression, not merely sound and adequate to poetic vision, but dynamic and strongly effective"[77], as for example; in the following verses :—

Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,
Like twilight's too her dusky hair,

But all things else about her drawn
From Maytime and the cheerful dawn.

(*Wordsworth*)

When hearts have once mingled,
Love first leaves the well-built nest,
The weak one is singled
To enduce what it once possessed.

(*Shelley*)

Sri Aurobindo says that English poetry is specially rich in effective style and "gets from it much of its energy and power."[78]

The "illuminative" style, however, goes one step still further and contains "a more intimate vision, a more penetrating spiritual emotion, a more intense and revealing speech, to which the soul can be more vibrantly sensible."[79] Here it is the inner mind which "sees and feels object, emotion, idea not only clearly or richly or distinctly and powerfully, but in a flash or outbreak of transforming light which kindles the thought or image into. . .a more profoundly revealing vision, emotion, spiritual response."[80] This may come suddenly and rarely as in Dryden's

And Paradise was opened in the face

or it may sustain itself for sometime, as in the following verses of Shelley :

The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute—
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruin'd cell.

In this stanza it appears that the lyrical speech in which it occurs "Passes now beyond itself into an illuminative closeness and then we feel, we bear, we ourselves live at the moment through the the power of the poetic word the authentic identity of the experience."[81]

It may strike across a movement of strong and effective political thinking, as in Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty* :

Me this unchartered freedom tires

or "leap up at once to set the tone of a poem", as in the following verses of Wordsworth :

She was a phantom of delight
When first the gleam'd upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;

And in the following lines of Shelley and Wordsworth, we get "the pure illuminative speech of poetry not mixed with or arising out of the lucidly adequate or the richly or forcefully effective or dynamic manner, but changed into an altogether supra-intellectual light of intuitive substance and vision and utterance."[82]

The silent moon
In her interlunar swoon,

(*Shelley*)

They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;

(*Wordsworth*)

But beyond this language of "intuitive illumination" "we arrive at a more uplifted range of an inspired poetic speech which brings to us not only pure light and beauty and inexhaustible depth, but a greater moved ecstasy of highest or largest thought and sight and speech and at its highest culminates in the inevitable, absolute and revealing word."[83] For example, in the following verses

A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides—

(*Wordsworth*)

Sri Aurobindo discovers that the adequate manner of the poet has undergo "a magical transformation." Sometimes it is "the illuminative speech" which may get "powerfully inspired" and rise "suddenly into the highest revealing word," as in the following verses by Wordsworth ;

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the step;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,

"Here", says Sri Aurobindo, "the inspiration takes up the effort of the poetic intelligence and imagination into a stirred concentration of the speech of sight and in its last movement seems to leap even beyond itself and beyond any pursuit or touch of the intellect into a pure revelatory spiritual vision."[84]

VI

Thus, these are the different grades of the power of poetic language but there is no brute fixity or untransformable rigidity in either or all of them. As Sri Aurobindo says in one of his letters, "all the styles, 'adequate', 'effective', etc. can be raised to inevitability in their own line."[85] That is to say, each one of these styles has a gradation of its own, and if the poet has the necessary ability, and inspiration in him, he may raise it to its own highest point which will be the point of "inevitability" as far as that particular style is concerned. And then there is also something like "supreme inevitability"[86] of expression. It is "a speech overwhelmingly sheer, pure and true, a quintessential essence of convincingly perfect utterance."[87] But it is something which is both unclassifiable and unanalysable. Some of the instances in English poetry would, however, include, says he, such different kinds of style as we have in Keat's "magic casements", Wordsworth's line on Newton in *The Prelude* and his "fields of sleep", and Shakespeare's "Macbeth has murdered sleep."

When asked whether there was any very strictly close co-ordination between the differences of style and the different planes of inspiration, he said categorically that there was no such logical connection, unless, of course, "one can say that the effective style comes from the higher mind, the illumined from the illumined mind, the inspired from the plane of intuition."[88]

Looking at the matter aesthetically, his opinion is that "the genius of the poet can do work of a high beauty or of a considerable greatness in any of these degrees of poetic speech."[89] But then it is no less self-evident that 'it is the more purely intuitive,

inspired or revelatory utterance that is the most rare and difficult for the human mind to command",[90] which the poetry of the future has to acquire if it is to make a truly solid and distinctive advance upon the achievements of the past. As a matter of fact, the greatest poets have always been "those in whom these moments of a highest intensity of intuitive and inspired speech have been of a frequent occurrence and in one or two, as in Shakespeare, of a miraculous abundance."[91] Only, we have got to emphasize that though this kind of utterance has been "essentially the same always", yet it "takes a different colour according to the kind of objective vision and subjective vision which is peculiar to the mind of the poet in its normal action."[92] This can be seen through an illustration. Here is Shakespeare :

> Life's but a walking shadow;.........
> ....................it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing—

and here is Shelley expressing a similar idea of life's transcience:

> Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadow fly;
> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
> Until Death tramples it to fragments.

Commenting upon them Sri Aurobindo saye, "The one has the colour of an intuition of the life-soul in one of its intense moods and we not only think the thought but seem to feel it even in our nerves of mental sensation, the other is the thought-mind itself uttering in a moved, inspired and illuminative language an idea of the pure intelligence."[93]

We may now take it that it will not be easily possible for the present human mind "to recover the same spirit as moved Shakespear's speech," for "it is never to that of the later poets and their voice of the brooding or the moved poetic intelligence or of the intuitive mind rising out of the intellect and still preserving something of its tones."[94] Still we may take it that the manner of the coming poetry is likely to recover and hold as its central secret something akin to the older poet, "a greater straight impact

and natural body of intuitive intensity." It will be more and more, the "language of a higher intuitive mind swallowing up the intellectual tones into the closeness and identities of a supra-intellectual light and Ananda."[95]

Thus, if the object of the future poetry, as Sri Aurobindo feels it is going to be, is "to express inmost truth of the things which it makes its subject,"[96] it is certain that it "must. . . express them in the inmost way, and that can only be done if, transcending the more intellectualised or externally vital and sensational expression, it speaks wholly in the language of an intuitive mind and vision and imagination, intuitive sense intuitive emotion, intuitive vital feeling."[97] Much of present-day English poetry is already moving in this direction, though with "less subtlety and a more forceful outwardness of sight and tone."[98] As Sri Aurobindo remarks very partinently : "The old habits of poetic speech still cling around and encrust or dilute the subtler subtlety, the more luminous light'. . .the deeper depths sought for by the intuitive utterance."[99] Nevertheless, there are definite signs that "a new manner of speech, a basis for the more inner and illumined poetic language of the future" is being increasingly shaped; and "it is this greatening, deepening and making normal of this kind that is likely to bring the perfect voice of the poetry of the nature."[100] Drawing upon the Upanishadic image of the golden lid which ultimately has to be rent by the aspiring human soul in order to obtain the highest, the absolute Truth, he says that that "speech also has to be found that shall come by the rending or removal of the golden lid between our intelligence and the effulgent supra-intelligence and effect a direct and sovereign descent and pouring of some absolute sight and word of the spirit into the moulds of human language."[101]

We have in these words of Sri Aurobindo a whole world of aesthetic wisdom. And it is a world which both the practising poets and artists and the forward-looking talented critics of today and tomorrow can fruitfully and inexhaustibly draw upon.

## Notes and References

1. *The Future Poetry,* Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953, p. 279.
2. *Ibid.,* p. 279.

3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 273-74.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 275-76.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 276.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 276-77.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 277-78.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 266-68.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 268.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, p. 269
22. *Ibid.*, p. 270.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 282.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 283-84.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 284.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 285
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*, p. 288.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 291.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*, p. 362.
37. *Ibid.*
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39. *Ibid.*
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41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 367-68.
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45. *Ibid.*, p. 370.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 371-72.
50. *Ibid.*, p p. 373-74.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 374.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 375.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 375-76.
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64. *Ibid.*, p. 379.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.*, p. 380.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, 3rd Series, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, p. 15.
70. *The Future Poetry, op. cit.*, p. 381.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 382.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*, p. 383.
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77. *Ibid.*, pp. 383-84.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 385.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 386.
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81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*, p. 387-88.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 388-89.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 389.
85. *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, 3rd Series, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
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87. *Ibid.*
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94. *Ibid.*, p. 392.
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97. *Ibid.*
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99. *Ibid.*, p. 395.
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# 65

# SRI AUROBINDO AND SHANKARACHARYA—A COMPARATIVE STUDY

R.K. Garg

The *Aurobindonian* dynamism or integralism is indeed a natural and logical conclusion of the Morganian and the Alexanderian evolutionism wedded to the *Aupanisadic Vedantism*. *Sri Aurobindo*, let us remember, is always on his strictest guard to avoid the fallacy of extremism of either kind—excess or defect. But it does not denote an endorsement of the Aristotelian principle of Golden Mean. He, in fact, heartily embraces the philosophy of integralism which resolves the apparent and seemingly irreconcilable contradictions in an all-inclusive, all-obsorptive and all-comprehending organic and hyperorganic unity. So much so that, he begins his *magnum opus* with two negations, materialistic and pinpoints therein their inner contradictions and errors of unreservedly reducing either conscious-force to matter or matter to conscious-force, in order to develop his own philosophy or integralism.

Now, follows a comparative account of the *Aurobindonian* integralism and the *Samkarite Advaitism*.

## BRAHMAN

*Samkara's Brahman* is the static unity of existence, consciousness and bliss, which transcends God, world, individualised soul,

*Maya*, space, time and say all finitude. For *Sri Aurobindo*, *Brahman* is a dynamic unity of existence, conscious-force, bliss and supermind. It is simultaneously both transcendent and immanent, dynamic and static, being and becoming, without forms and with forms, etc. *Brahman*, for *Sri Aurobindo* has an eternal creative power which being an integral and real part and parcel of *Brahman* creates a real world. *Samkarita Advaitism*, by denying the reality of God, cosmos and *Maya*, etc. consummates in barren absolutism. It saps the very possibilities of creation and evolution, even if it posits an arbitrary concept of *Maya* which is said to be ineffable. *Sri Aurobindo*, on the other hand, annuals nothing but embraces all. He does not explain away *Maya* by calling it ineffable but considers it an inseparably inherent essence of *Brahman*. To quote him, "Force is inherent in Existence. *Shiva* and *Kali*, *Brahman* and *Shakti* are one and not two who are separate. Force inherent in existence may be at rest or it may be in motion, but when it is at rest, it exists nonetheless and is not abolished, diminished or in any way essentially altered."[1] It is quite inconceivable to accept that the Force is an alien thing which enters the Absolute from outside or that it was non-existent and came into existence at some moment. We must, therefore, conclude that eternal *status* and *dynamis*, the mobile and the immobile *Brahman* are both the same Reality. Dynamis and status are equally real and none of them is an illusion.

## SOUL

In the *Samkarite Vedanta*, the soul is no other than *Brahman*. It is eternal, immutable, static, partless, ever-liberated, uncaused, detached, pure and non-dual reality which is always indicated by 'thisness,' not by 'whatness' which is superimposed on it. It, being a non-dual principle, is immediate and self-proved. *Samkara* admits of no change or mutation in the soul. *Vidyaranya Muni* calls it eternal and formless. *Suresvaracarya* pronounces it to be unmodified and unmoulded. Thus, the soil, for the *Samkarites*, is a non-dual unity having no possibility of multiplicity. On the other hand, *Sri Aurobindo* affirms in the soul both oneness and manyness, eternality and ephemerality, permanency and dynamicity, universality and individuality, being and non-being, non-quality and duality, involution and evolution, and so on and so

forth. The soul, for him, is an all-embracing, all comprehending and all-absorbing unitary consciousness. It is said, in its self-experience, to live eternally in the presence of the Absolute. To quote him, "Our unity with world being is the consciousness of a Self which at one and the same time cosmicises in the world and individualises through the individual *Purusha*, and both in that world-being and in this individual being and in all individual beings it is aware of the same Self-manifesting and experiencing its various manifestations. That then is a self which must be one in its being,—otherwise we could not have this experience of unity,—and yet must be capable in its very unity of cosmic differentiation and multiple individuality."[2]

## NATURE

The nature, by the *Samkarite* non-dualists, is called illusory or false (*mithya*). Since *Brahman* is the non-dual reality, says *Samkara*, the nature with its multitudinous forms must needs be a false appearance. According to *Citsukhacarya*, the nature is an apparent modification of *Brahman*, white it (the nature) is a substantial transformation of *Maya* as, for example, the water of the clouds. *Suresvaracarya* says that *Maya* is *trigunatmika* (made of three *gunas*, i.e. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) and that the nature, being a product of this *trigunatmika Maya*, is *trigunatmika* as well. Hence, as *Maya* means that which is nought yet appears to be, so nature means. *Sri Aurobindo* rejects the *Samkarite* doctrine of the nature as a false appearance. The non-duality of *Brahman*, according to him, does not exclude the nature and its multiplicity from itself but comprehends it in an indescribable unitary consciousness where the mentally unresolved contradictions of one and many, of permanence and change, of unity and multiplicity, are eternally resolved in a supramental consciousnesss. The nature is as much real and divine as the soul. For both are the real transformations of *Brahman*. It is the principle of nature, says *Sri Aurobindo*, upon which life stands as upon a pedestal or out of which it evolves like the form of a many-branching tree out of its encasing seed.[3] The nature is said to work out man in a living laboratory of the animal. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious co-operation it wills to work out the superman, the God.[4] Hence, the nature

not only progressively unfolds what is asleep or involved in it but also overtly realises that which it secretly is. In sharp contrast to *Samkara*'s nature, *Sri Aurobindo's* nature is not only breathing and living but also creative and conscious. "*Prakrti*", says *Sri Aurobindo*, "presents itself as an inconscient energy in the material world, but as the scale of consciousness rises, she reveals herself more and more as a conscious force and we perceive that even her inconscience concealed a secret consciousness".[5]

## MAYA

The whole superstructure of the *Samkarite Vedanta* is built on the foundation of its pivotal principle of *Adhyasa* or superimposition. Superimposition, defines *Samkara* in his prolegomena to *Vedanta Bhasya*, is the appearance by way of remembrance of something previously seen somewhere. It is, in other words, the awareness of that which it is not (*atasmistadbuddhih*). So much so that, it requires two things—the substratum of superimposition and the object superimposed. Granted that there is nothing but non-dual *Brahman*, *Samkara* fails to satisfactorily answer as to from where the object superimposed arises. This failure to account for superimposition involves him in an inescapable Eleatic dualism of being and non-being, *Brahman* and *Maya* which shatters his whole system to the ground. True *Advaita Vedanta*, according to *Sri Aurobindo* does not annul *Maya* from Brahman, but accepts it as a real, creative and inseparable power of *Brahman*. To quote him, "the real Monism, the true *Advaita* is that which admits all things as the one *Brahman* and does not seek to bisect its existence into two incompatible entities, an eternal Truth and Falsehood, *Brahman* and not-*Brahman*, Self and not-Self, a real Self and an unreal, yet perpetual *Maya*. If it is true that the self alone exists, it must also be true that all is the Self."[6] *Sri Aurobindo* takes an integral view of *Saccidananda*. *Saccidananda* is an equipoised unity or a harmonious togetherness of the supercosmic, the cosmic and the individual. It manifests itself in the cosmos as well as the individual by its inseparable force for its own play. Hence, from downside to upside and upside to downside there is but one reality pierced through and through in the whole universe. Consequently, nothing is unreal in the cosmos but everything is full of infinite possibilities.

## LIBERATION

Liberation from bondage, according to the *Samkarites*, consists in one's differentiating the reality of the soul from the unreality of the ego, the intelligence, the vital principle, the senses, the body and the world with women, son, land and riches. It means cessation of the tricycle of birth, death and rebirth with consequent realisation of one's non-duality with *Brahman*. It is that state of all-perfection of the so-called individual soul where *Brahman* alone shines. It is the state of positive delight. It is, verily, *Saccidananda* in its entirety. We must here be on our strictest guard against the misunderstanding as to his being the novel creation or the purification of some old mental state. Liberation, in fact, is the awareness of what is, was and will be always there, even in the state of bondage, though of course not discovered then. It may well be compared to the awareness of the pen in one's own hand by one who forgot its possession there and looked for it here and there. *Sri Aurobindo* rejects this *Samkarite* account of liberation as individualistic, ascetic, unprofitable and valueless. In sharp contrast to the *Samkarite* idea of individual salvation which leads us to regard other souls as if they were figments of our imagination and their salvation meaningless, our soul alone as if it were entirely real and its salvation the one thing that matters, *Sri Aurobindo* forwards the idea of cosmic salvation which asks us to fulfil God integrally and satisfy the conditions of His self-revelation. Moreover, the idea of individual salvation is a misnomer. "Individual salvation", says *Sri Aurobindo*, "can have no real sense, if existence in the cosmos is itself an illusion."[7] Hence, he hails the idea of the divination of individual as well cosmic being integrally. The integral divination of the individual being does not mean the relinquishment of the lower physical, vital and mental life which is its ground but to transform it in the light of the higher supramental life which is its *summum bonum*. The salvation of the individual soul, says *Sri Aurobindo*, "is the point of Light at which the intended complete self-manifestation in the Many begins to emerge. But the liberated soul extends its perception of unity horizontally as well as vertically. Its unity with the transcendent. One is incomplete without the cosmic many . . . the divine soul reproduces itself in similar liberated souls as the animal reproduces itself in similar body."[8] This process of divine reproduction

continues so long as the commonwealth of gnostic beings is not established on the earth. Thus, salvation is neither escape from the world nor abnegation of worldly relation, nor cessation of the tricycle of birth, death and rebirth, but making of individual as well as cosmic destiny by bringing down the "Life Divine" into the individual and thereby manifesting the divinity in the cosmos.

## PATH-WAY TO GOD

The *Samkarites* hold that *Jnana-Yoga* (path of knowledge) is the only means or path to liberation. Liberation cannot be attained, says Samkara, without knowledge. In his *Sarikara Bhasya* on the *Bhagavad-Gita*, he strongly remarks that knowledge-fire burns all actions to ashes and accomplishes liberation. But *Sri Aurobindo* lays no exclusive emphasis on one particular *Yoga*. He is an ardent advocate of the *Synthesis of Yoga* which seeks to synthesise all the extant *Yogas*, especially the *Jnana*, *Bhakti*, *Karma* and *Raja Yogas*. Besides, all other *Yogas* lay an exclusive stress on one or more of the different powers of man. For example, Janana Yoga exclusively employs the intellectual and mental power, Bhakti Yoga, the emotional power, Karma Yoga, the moral and spiritual power and Raja Yoga, the physical and vital power as a channel to God. But the *Synthesis of Yoga* employs, develops, conserves, controls, co-ordinates, concentrates and utilises all the different powers,—physical, vital, mental, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual—for the supreme purpose of comprehending God. This is also known as integral Yoga or Purna Yoga. Defining this integral Yoga, Sri Aurobindo says, "Yoga is that which, having found the Transcendent, can return upon the universe and possess, it, retaining the power freely to descend as well as ascend the great stair of existence." It is thus, integral not only in respect of the means and the path but also in respect of its goal.

In conclusion, we can safely say that *Sri Aurobindo* being an integralist, not only synthesises all the extant evolutionary and emergent philosophies in a consistent whole but also adds to them something more which lacked in them all. He seems to have put an end to the old controversy as to whether or not the world is real, by emphasising the reality and divinity of the world of experience. So much so that, he rejects the *Samkarite Maya* as an

arbitrary principle and formulates a unique conception of *Maya* as an integral part and parcel of *Brahman* which is an equipoise of existence, consciousness-force and bliss.

## Notes and References

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 78.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 334.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 316.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

# 66

# AUROBINDO GHOSE IN INDIAN POLITICS (1893-1910) : AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF A NOTED BENGALI INTELLECTUAL

AMALENDU DE*

An attempt has been made in this paper to throw light on the revolutionary movement in India, particularly centring round a noted Bengali intellectual, Aurobindo Ghose, who had played an important part during its first phase (1876-1910). The main points taken up by me for discussion are : (1) Different stages of the revolutionary movement and its broad categorisation; (2) Characterisation of this movement by some critics of Aurobindo and his associates; (3) A critical assessment of Aurobindo's role; (4) Indian revolutionary movement in Asian and European context; (5) Legacy of the movement.

## 1. Different Stages of the Revolutionary Movement and its Broad Categorisation

There were four types of armed struggle launched in India for the emancipation of the country from colonial domination, viz. : (1) uprisings led by the peasants, tribals, artisans and other lower strata people from the late 18th to the end of the 19th or the beginning of the 20th centuries; (ii) Faraizi-Wahhabi movements of the Indian Muslim community from 1818 to 1870;

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(iii) Revolt of 1857-58; (iv) armed struggle led by a section of English educated upper and middle classes from the late 19th century to the days of partition in 1947. Each of this struggle had its distinctive features. I am concerned here with the fourth category of armed struggle. By the term 'revolutionaries' I mean those who believed in the application of force for the overthrow of British rule so that they could realize complete independence of the country. Long before the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 the theory of application of force for this particular purpose developed as a political concept by a section of intellectuals of Bengal and Maharashtra who were products of English education. I am inclined to mention the following stages in discussing the revolutionary movement in our country (a) 1876-1910; (b) 1911-1919; (c) 1920-1923; (d) 1924-1934; (e) 1935-1947. Though few years before 1876 we find the concept of application of force nurtured by Rajnarayan Bose (1826-1899) in Bengal, it got a definite organisational form in that year mainly due to the efforts of Basudeo Balwant Phadke of Maharashtra for which he was rightly called the 'father of militant nationalism in India.' In 1876 he founded a secret society with the object of forcible overthrow of British rule in India.[1] Aurobindo appeared on the scene in 1893 and since then he gave a philosophical and moral shape to the political concept of 'armed insurrection.' In fact, he was the dominant figure during the period 1893-1910.[2] For a long time the revolutionary movement ran counter to the political ideals of moderate reformers. Even after the adoption of Gandhian ideals of 'non-violent non-co-operation' by the Indian National Congress as its creed in 1920, the revolutionary movement based on the theory of armed struggle continued as a distinct trend side by side with Gandhism.[3] As the revolutionaries of this category founded their ideology on Indian nationalism as visualised by them, naturally they had differences with those revolutionaries who embraced Marxism or 'Scientific Socialism' as their creed from 1920 onwards. This was the year from which the dissemination and creative application of Marxism started in this country.[4] Since then Indian revolutionaries were divided into two groups, viz., nationalist-revolutionaries and marxist-revolutionaries. Both these groups were opposed to the Gandhian creed. In discussing the role of the believers in armed struggle I would prefer this categorisation. Thus from 1920 to 1947 two distinct

trends in the broad category of 'armed struggle' or 'revolutionary movement' are found : one 'nationalist-revolutionary' and another 'marxist-revolutionary.' As the purpose of my paper is to analyse the role of the nationalist-revolutionaries led by Aurobindo, I would only incidentally refer to the Marxists just to place Aurobindo in proper perspectives of the non-proletarian anti-colonial movement of Europe.[5]

Throughout the whole course of armed struggle three prominent nationalist-revolutionaries may be mentioned as intellectual-*cum*-political leaders of Bengal for their contributions to Indian struggle for freedom. They were, Aurobindo Ghose, Rashbehari Bose and Subhas Chandra Bose. Through their efforts at different stages the entire orbit of the nationalist-revolutionary movement was completed. The legacy of armed struggle left behind by Aurobindo was taken up by Rashbehari and finally Subhas Chandra gave a concrete shape by working out a detailed political and economic programme.[6] As I think different stages of armed struggle led by the nationalist-revolutionaries are interlinked, their ideas and programmes should be taken together for discussion, not in isolation. This would help us to understand their limitations as well as their efforts to overcome them : and, at the same time it would be clear to us on what grounds the nationalist-revolutionaries and marxist-revolutionaries under C.P.I. failed to move together at a crucial moment to fulfil the task of Indian revolution.[7]

## 2. Characterisation of this Movement by some Critics of Aurobindo and his Associates

Recently several scholars have dealt with the first phase of the revolutionary movement, i.e., from 1876 to 1910. According to some analysts the ideals on which the militant nationalist movement flourished were Hindu in spirit, not merely culturally but from the religious aspect as well. Niharranjan Ray pointed out this aspect of the militantly aggressive nationalist movement led by Aurobindo.[8] Similar observations were made by Bipin Chandra. He wrote : "Many of the Extremists identified nationalism with the revival of Hinduism and saw nationalism as religion which was invariably in the nature of things, Hinduism."[9] Niharranjan Ray also stated that the Moderates were much more 'progressive' in their social and economic thinking, and politically

'more secular.' He wrote : "Strangely enough, the so-called 'Moderates' or liberals, were, socially speaking, much more progressive in their social and economic thinking, much more secular and generally, much more modern and scientific in their outlook."[10] The upshot remains that by reason of identifying nationalism with revival of Hinduism, the Muslims found no interest in the movement as such; as a matter of fact, it tended to alienate the Muslim community. As Bipin Chandra observed : "The strong Hindu tinge in much of the nationalist thought and propaganda, inspite of the basically secular approach and programme of Congress, tended to repel and alienate Muslims instinctively. It tended to orientate them towards a communal outlook with feeling that the success of such a national movement would mean 'a Hindu supremacy in Indian politics."[11] Moreover, it has been claimed that the Extremists lacked a comprehensive 'socio-economic programme' : and, their ideas not fully worked out remained confined to narrow limits. They had no clear idea about the form of government after the overthrow of alien rule which was their immediate aim. For these reason they did not succeed in launching a mass movement. Analysing the main features of the Indian revolutionary movement Bhupendra Nath Datta remarked that it lacked 'socio-economic programme.'[12] Furthermore, Bipin Chandra has drawn a line of distinction between Tilak on the one hand and Aurobindo on the other. He has shown a reluctance to place Tilak in the 'communal camp' though his 'appeal to Hindu culture'. proved 'himself in the Indian context' : the reason being that Tilak's "basic political propaganda and agitations were organized around political and economic issues and contained little appeal to Hinduism, and certainly much less than in the case of Aurobindo Ghose and B.C. Pal."[13] Bipin Chandra assertively stated that "Tilak's politics, ideology and agitational methods were not communal." Even referring to the post-1918 nationalists who used Hindu symbols, Bipin Chandra observed that "their use of the Hindu political idiom was very indifferent from that of Aurobindo Ghose and Bipin Chandra Pal."[14] Applying similar argument he did not, however, place Mahatma Gandhi in the 'communal camp' though the Mahatma freely used Hindu symbols, myths and idioms. Thus according to Bipin Chandra, the place for Aurobindo would be of necessity in the 'communal camp.'[15] These

observations, however, deserve proper scrutiny.

**3. A Critical Assessment of Aurobindo's Role**

Let us now examine these observations in the light of the records of the period. At the outset one might ask : What was the aim on which the revolutionaries focussed their attention ? The revolutionaries of Bengal led by Aurobindo and his associates directed their energy to forcibly destroy the British rule in this country. Aurobindo was quite aware of the fact that without mass mobilisation his efforts would prove fruitless. It was again Aurobindo, who, in 1893, said that "the real strength of the National Congress lay in the masses—the proletariat."[16] Exposing "the hollowness and absurdity of the policy of protest, petition and prayer" of the National Congress represented by the 'middle class,' Aurobindo wanted to convert it into a 'really national' organization mobilising the masses—the proletariat in it.[17] I do not know whether any other leader before him used the word 'proletariat' in this sense. Through his articles Aurobindo made the 'new born nation' aware of its subjection as well as the necessity to strive for freedom. In fact, from 1893, Aurobindo "devoted himself to the working out of his idea of preparing the country—especially its youths—for some form of direct action which would ultimately develop into an armed insurrection."[18]

For that Aurobindo took an active part in forming a new wing in the National Congress, called the New Party, keeping Tilak as its leader. The advanced section of nationalists, who discarded the path of the moderate leaders assembled in this Party. Aurobindo's sole object was to push it to "a more forward and direct political action than the moderate reformism" which was still "the creed of the Indian National Congress." In this way he wanted to capture from the moderate leaders 'the Congress and the Country.' The Nationalists (called by their opponents Extremists) had to propound political theories and to adopt and apply new techniques for founding their position on a solid ground. *Swaraj* or independence became their goal. This concept was quite contrary to the Moderate idea of 'colonial self-government' to be realised 'by a slow progress of reform.' Moreover, the programme of the Nationalists resembled in spirit 'the policy of Sinn Fein.' It was based on the principles of 'self-help.' Besides, the Nationalists "professed a complete non-co-operation with the

Government." Boycott of foreign goods, law courts and Government controlled educational institutions were incorporated in their programme in order to foster the *Swadeshi* spirit. Moreover, they promoted an all-India outlook and upheld the ideal of Hindu-Muslim unity. Young men were urged to form societies to set up parallel administration. Another important aspect of the programme was "a policy of passive resistance." Through this programme they wanted to make the Congress "the direct centre of an organised national action" and to rouse up the masses.[19] This wing built up by Aurobindo and his associates remained open to all shades of Nationalists—believers in armed struggle or not. As Aurobindo had an idea of transforming the mass movement organized by the Nationalists with these programmes and techniques into an armed insurrection in near future for the final bid for power, he carefully built up a secret revolutionary core under his direct supervision within the Nationalist wing. Only the believers in armed struggle were incorporated in this group.[20]

To realize his political ideals Aurobindo felt it was necessary to train young workers in such a manner that they could adore *Bhawani*, the Mother of Strength, before their initiation into revolutionary work and thereby overcome the fear of death. Aurobindo believed that "in the absence of strength we are like men in a dream who have hands but cannot seize or strike, who have feet but cannot run." India, therefore, needed *shakti* alone. He spoke of "the living unity of the *shaktis* of three hundred million people," not of the Hindus alone. He also pointed out that India could be 'reborn' if the 'spirit within' was realized as "the true source of strength." Aurobindo divided the Indian people into three broad categories, viz. (a) the poor and ignorant; (b) the middle class; and (c) those who could be termed wealthy. He visualised that the *Sannyasis*, (i.e., dedicated young men) devoted to *Bhawani Bharati*, Mother of India, heal all discords and create "a common passion for one great ideal between all classes." He believed that after drawing strength from the fountains of religion the people of India would be in a position to properly apply Western knowledge and science for the uplift of the whole nation. So he emphasized on "India's greater need of spiritual regeneration." He looked forward to a new India abounding in factories and workshops : their yields in profits utilized for further development of the country; and all this to be

achieved without detaching themselves from the moorings of her past spiritual heritage.[21]

There was no doubt that in order to explain his ideas and to rouse vigorous emotions in people, spurring them to action, Aurobindo often used Hindu symbols and referred to the 'Aryan ideals.'[22] This was quite natural, if we have in mind the social conditions of the time, as well as the family background of those who joined the revolutionary movement. Barring a few, most of them came from the English educated upper and middle class Hindu and Brahmo families. They drew inspiration from the fountain of their own religion. However, as they were guided by the idea of emancipating the entire nation, they could not remain indifferent to the Muslim community. Initially the young men of this community were enrolled in the secret organization, but there were very few Muslim revolutionaries. As a later period the enrolment of Muslim members was stopped for the time being, but very soon orders were issued to take them in. Afterwards, either as a result of mutual distrust or diverse factors, the Muslim members were not available for recruitment. The fact of the matter was that Muslim society was not at that time prepared for armed insurrection.[23] The uneven growth of these two communities combined with various socio-economic factors prevented the Hindus and Muslims from moving together. After some time the young men of the *Brahmo Samaj*, also did not come forward to join the revolutionaries. Considering the strict discipline of a secret revolutionary organization the leaders thought it wise to emotionally or otherwise attached to each other. So the revolutionary ideas and activities were confined to the Hindus : and the Hindu tinge in the movement remained prominent. It reflected as "Hindu Nationalism," and the Muslim revolutionaries, however, small might be their number, did not find the atmosphere congenial.[24]

Dealing with this aspect one would certainly ponder why a person like Aurobindo could not link up India's past heritage with the liberal-humanitarian trend of the medieval period fostered by many saints, social-religious reformers and rulers or princes like Akbar, Dara Shikuh and others : Keeping in view the multi-religious and multi-lingual character of the country, so that the movement could push forward unleashing new strength and mobilising people of different communities on the same track,[25]

Moreover, the question may be raised as to why Aurobindo could not evolve a socio-economic programme like the Marxists or other revolutionary groups of Europe.[26] Aurobindo's education, experience and personality pointed to the fact that he was eminently suited for the role. These were definite limitations no doubt but should not lead us to minimise the positive aspects of the revolutionary movement planned by Aurobindo.

The critics forgot the fact that Aurobindo maintained close contact with the revolutionaries of Maharashtra and other places. The revolutionary core within the Nationalists was, however, led by Aurobindo and Tilak. Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal were not with them in preparing the country for a revolutionary upsurge. Bengal and Maharashtra led by Aurobindo and Tilak respectively moved together to guide the nation in the same direction. It is proved from official documents that neither the Bengal revolutionaries nor their counterparts from Maharashtra suffered from a parochial outlook : they rather fostered the spirit of Indianism. The revolutionary workers of Bengal adored Tilak as their leader. Similarly, the radicals of Maharashtra had no hesitation in accepting Aurobindo's leadership at a crucial moment at Surat : Tilak was arrested and deported in 1908 for sympathising was the Bengal revolutionaries after the Muzaffarpur incident : and, the unprecedented upsurge of the workers of Bombay Mills was of necessity associated with the trial of Tilak : these incidents prove that the conception of oneness and integrity of India had already emerged.[27] Another point is to be noted in this connection. Aurobindo was well acquainted with the methods and techniques adopted by the secret organizations of Europe. But he favoured the 'Russian type' for India.[28] The Lieutenant Governor of Bombay, Mr. Clarke, openly announced that he could trace Russian style of activities during the days of the general strike of Bombay in 1908, supported by the Tilak Party.[29] Would it not indicate closeness of these two groups—Bengal and Maharashtra ? For this reason the British Government attacked both of them at a time.

Aurobindo and his group in Bengal, fully realized the necessity of fostering Hindu-Muslim unity in order to reach their desired end. Abdul Rasul, Leakat Hossain and Abdul Huq were their close associates. These three Muslim leaders played a very important part in the nationalist movement in the beginning of

this century.[30] Hailing from Behar Maulavi Leakat Hossain made Calcutta the centre of his activities. The Bengal revolutionaries attached much importance to his Urdu leaflet on India's struggle for freedom.[31] Maulavi Abdul Huq not only stood by the side of Aurobindo and other Nationalists at Midnapore : he also had the privilege of presiding over 'the first formal Nationalist Conference held in India' in 1907.[32]

Aurobindo, however, did not hesitate to criticise those Muslim leaders like Nawab Salimullah of Dacca who engineered communal riots to frustrate the *boycott* and *Swadeshi* programme of the Congress during the anti-partition agitation. The situation became complicated when the communalist in several places took recourse to communalism as an effective weapon against the rising tide of nationalism. These elements were encouraged and they even received assistance from certain official quarter. Aurobindo sensed the danger and he urged upon the people to take up lathis and bombs for the purpose of self-defence against the 'ruffians' and to safeguard the movement from the attack of the communalists. Aurobindo's articles on the atrocities in comilla and Jamalpur in the *Bande Mataram* in 1907 clearly reveal his views.[33] Some Scholars have endeavoured to trace communalism his writings. But the British Government discerned the actual intention of Aurobindo. In connection with the Alipore Bomb case, which was instituted against Aurobindo and his followers for waging war against the British Empire, Justice Carnduff broached the subject and on November 29, 1909, he clearly stated by referring to the writings and statements of the revolutionaries that "self-defence against the aggressiveness of the Muhammadans involved opposition to the Government;" and, "the objective was the Government, and not the Muhammadans." He also commented that he got no evidence "in record for the theory of apprehension in respect of Muhammadan aggression" beyond the incidents at Jamalpore, Mymensingh and Comilla in Eastern Bengal. Even the Sylhet District remained unaffected. Besides 'legitimate self-defence is hardly consistent with such secrecy as necessitated cryptographic correspondence."[34] In support of these views the Government produced a number of leaflets or other documents in the form of 'exhibits' during the Alipore Bomb Case. The revolutionaries circulated a broad-sheet printed in the Vernacular throughout Eastern Bengal and among the Bengalis

resident in Assam. This sheet was distributed secretly on a very large scale and copies were to be found in every town and village. Through these leaflet they made the people conscious about the economic exploitation of the British, sad plight of different sections of Indian population, the slavish mentality of the zamindars and the 'Babus;' and, also exposed the role of the Hindu priests, Maulavis of the Muslim community and headmen of the Sikhs for disrupting communal harmony in the name of religion. They also warned the oppressive zamindars and decided not to 'pay enhanced rents.' They urged upon the '*brother*' Hindus and Muslims to stand up together against the British rule.[35]

It is also revealed from the confidential files of the Midnapore Case that in 1903 the revolutionaries of Midnapore District sang *swadeshi* songs "exhorting Hindus and Mussalmans to join together for relief of the mother country from the hands of the *Firingis*."[36] Condemning the role of the *Firingis*, one of the leaders of the District commented : "Our *Firingi* king is a cheat. We have no faith in him. At the time of Mahomedan rule the mother land was crowned gold. Since the *Firingis* have come to the land we are dying for morsels of food. They are blood suckers and tyrants, they are enjoying all comforts by drawing-away our money while we are begging about for food."[37]

I can cite more passages like this from the files of the Alipore Bomb Case and the Midnapore Case in order to prove that the revolutionaries of the time (1905-10) made attempts to reach and get the support of the rural people—both Hindus and Muslims and for this purpose they took up economic issues. They exposed the 'Babus' and 'Zamindars' also. Besides the revolutionaries of Bengal asserted that "they must have the Canadian form of Government."[38] It was thus clear that though they could not evolve a socio-economic programme like the European Marxists or revolutionaries, or, draft a Constitution for a multi-lingual and multi-religious country like India, they were not unaware of all these issues. But their critics have missed them.

### 4. Indian Revolutionary Movement in Asian and European Context

In this background a number of questions would come up : Did the nationalist-revolutionaries make any effort to establish

contact with the international working class movement? Were their ideas similar to the 'revisionists' or to the 'Marxists'? How did V.I. Lenin and socialists of France look at them? The nationalist-revolutionaries tried to build up strong public opinion in favour of Indian independence in European countries by establishing close links with the international working class movement. For that they set up centres at Paris, Geneva, Berlin, London and other places. They even approached the organisers of the Congress of the Second International held at Stuttgart in Germany on August 18, 1907 with a request that this 'powerful and influential Congress' should adopt a resolution in support of India's struggle for freedom.[39]

This eagerness to establish contact with the international working class movement was not a new phenomenon. A section of Bengali intelligentsia felt the necessity of establishing contact with the First International since its formation in 1864. The nationalist-revolutionaries of later times carried forward this tradition[40] The international working class movement left such an impact on the national struggle of peoples in the colonies that even the Indian Moderate leaders realized its importance and established contact with it. Dadabhai Naoroji was present at the Amsterdam Congress of the Second International held in 1904 to influence its leaders to adopt a resolution in accordance with the ideas of the moderate reformers.[41]

As the international working class movement was sharply divided into two groups, viz., 'revisionists' and 'marxists,' naturally the leaders of the Second International had to express their attitudes towards the struggle of the people against colonial domination. These two groups were involved in an open clash at the Stuttgart Congress in 1907 in connection with the adoption of a resolution on the colonial policy. The 'revisionists' believed in the rule of the 'civilising mission' of the capitalist society, whereas the 'marxists' led by Lenin boldly upheld the anti-colonial policy of Marx and Engels.[42] The Marxists stood for complete emancipation of the colonies from foreign domination. But their proposition on the colonial question was not acceptable to the 'revisionists,' who were the predominant elements in the working class movement of that time.[43]

Keeping this background in mind if we analyse the attitudes of the Moderates and the Nationalists we find that both these

groups belonged to the category of 'non-proletarian anti-colonialism.' Each of them tried to strengthen their position by enlisting support of the Second International and other Labour Parties. The ideas of the Moderates were to some extent similar to those 'revisionists' of the international working class movement who still believed in the 'civilising mission' of the European countries. On the other hand, the views of the Nationalists led by Aurobindo were broadly in line with those Marxists who propounded the theory of complete independence of the colonies. Aurobindo's efforts to maintain contacts with the Second International and other Labour Parties vindicated his position as a thoroughgoing anti-colonialist though he looked at the national and colonial issue from a non-proletarian standpoint. There was no doubt that he was the most powerful of all the non-proletarian anti-colonial publicists of the time.[44]

It should be noted here that Lenin and European revolutionaries were aware of the activities of the Nationalists or nationalist-revolutionaries. In 1908, Lenin was happy to see "in India the street is beginning to stand up for its writers and public leaders." He bitterly criticised the 'whole British bourgeous press' for raising 'a howl' against Keir Hardie, the British M.P. and leader of the Independent Labour Party, who had the courage "to visit India and speak to Indians". Aurobindo's discussion with Keir Hardie created a stir at that time. Lenin also severely condemned the British rulers for sending Tilak to exile for his articles on the bomb throwing incident at Muzaffarpur. Lenin was, however, glad to note that the Government action had "evoked street demonstrations and a strike in Bombay." He commented that as in India "the proletariat has already developed to conscious political struggle," in the "Russian-style British regime in India is doomed". He also pointed out that "by their colonial plunder of Asian countries the Europeans have succeeded in so steeling one of them, Japan, that she has gained great military victories, which have ensured her independent national development." Lenin was of opinion that "the age-old plunder of India by the British, and the contemporary struggle of all these 'advanced' Europeans against Persian and Indian democracy, will steel millions, tens of millions of proletarians in Asia to wage a struggle against their oppressors which will be just as victorious as that of the Japanese." He was at the same time elated to see that "the class-conscious European

Eworker now has comrades in Asia and their number will grow by leaps and bounds." This was Lenin's analysis of Indian political situation in Asian and European context.[45] Now the question is : Could we think of the up surge of Bombay workers against the Judgment of the Tilak Trial completely ignoring the Muzaffarpur incident of April 30, 1908 with which involvement of Aurobindo and his followers were quite clear ?

Besides Lenin, the French socialists were also conversant with the events in India. They highly praised the Bengali revolutionaries when they got news of the assassination of Naren Gossain inside the jail. The *L'Humanite*, the mouthpiece of the Socialists of Paris, commented that this heroic deed would always be remembered as the first incident in the history of world revolution.[46]

The critics of Aurobindo have completely ignored these points and their views remain merely subjective observations on Aurobindo's role in the national struggle for freedom. It would be, therefore, historically inaccurate to characterise the political ideas of the nationalist-revolutionaries of this period as 'non-secular' though they contained a certain 'Hindu tinge.' How can we underestimate the role of the revolutionaries who by their spirit of dedication gave a new direction to the struggle for Indian independence ? The revolutionary fire kindled by them was not extinguished inspite of Aurobindo's departure from the political scene in 1910. New leaders came forward to carry on the struggle.

**5. Legacy of the Movement**

Aurobindo retired from politics to lead a different life at Pondicherry, but his disciples remained to guide the nationalist-revolutionary movement. Motilal Roy and Jyotirindranath Mukhopadhyay were disciples of Aurobindo. Rashbehari Bose got his initiation into revolutionary ideology from Motilal at Chandernagore in 1911 and from that time onwards till his departure to Japan in May 1915, Rashbehari was the leading figure of the nationalist-revolutionary movement in the country. Though Rashbehari considered himself as the disciple of Aurobindo and drew inspiration from the self-resignation theory of the *Geeta*, he could successfully mobilise different shades of people irrespective of religious and community distinctions for a revolutionary upsurge against the British Government on an all-India basis on February 21, 1915. The Indian National Flag made during this

time under his direction contained four colours representing the Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs and other communities living in this country. The *Anushilan Samiti* and the *Ghadrs* moved together under Rashbehari's leadership to found an united independent India.[47] Few months after the collapse of this upsurge, another disciple of Aurobindo, Jyotirindranath Mukhopadhyay, who considered his struggle for the emancipation of the country as the part of spiritual worship as well as part of disinterested religiousness as preached by the *Geeta,* made an endeavour to stage an armed insurrection against the British Government with the supply of arms from Germany in September, 1915. This attempt also failed.[48] Both Rashbehari and Jyotirindranath were guided by the theory of 'England's enemy our friend'.[49] During this time, the nationalist revolutionary fold could enlist workers from the Sikh and Muslim communities; and, in their centres in Europe, America, Canada and other places the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim revolutionaries moved together. The Provisional Independent Government was set up at Kabul in 1916 by Mahendra Pratap and Barkatullah.[50] Close links between the nationalist-revolutionaries in India and their counterparts abroad would prove that even before the pre-1918 period they had developed the revolutionary movement to a new stage. Gradually, the vague notion of Indian Republic became much more distinct in this circle. Being guided by this idea Bhagat Singh and Surjya Sen formed their armed groups to destroy the British rule.[51] At a later stage Subhas Chandra Bose, who often used Hindu idioms and ideals and drew inspiration from India's past civilisation like Aurobindo and his followers, and also believed in the theory of 'England's enemy our friend', pushed the nationalist-revolutionary movement to another higher stage by incorporating the programme of National Planning in 1938 as part of the programme of National struggle.[52] This was the time from when Subhas Chandra was trying to mobilise various revolutionary groups to weaken the hold of the rightists in the national struggle as well as to translate his concept of 'total movement' into a reality by destroying the British *Raj.*[53] On the other had Rashbehari Bose kept alive the spirit of nationalist-revolutionary movement in the south-east Asian region with Tokyo as its headquarters during the period May 1915-July 4, 1943. The organization built up by him was handed over to Subhas Chandra on July 4, 1943 so that he could give a concrete shape to his

dreams long cherished by him during his exile in Japan. It is to be noted that he could easily place Subhas Chandra as the President of his *Indian Independence League* as he was still under the influence of the *Geeta's* self-resignation thory. Subhas Chandra, of course, made Rashbehari the Chief Adviser of the *Azad Hind Government* established on October 21, 1943 and also paid a great tribute to him by calling Rashbehari as "the Father of Indian Independence Movement in East Asia."[54] Now the questions are : Could we think of Subhas Chandra of this period without Rashbehari ? Did Rashbehari, a disciple of Aurobindo remain confined to narrow shells of a particular community inspite of his attachment to the ideals of the *Geeta* or his association with the *Hindu Mahasabha* in Japan ? Could we isolate Rashbehari from the first stage of the movement initiated by Aurobindo ? My conclusion would be we cannot do so. It is quite well-known at a later stage Tilak shifted his position from the militant nationalism to the Home Rule League Movement.[55] But the disciple of Aurobindo, Rashbehari Bose, kept alive the light kindled by his Master which was handed over to Subhas Chandra for an united independent India where all communities will get their due share and position. But the critics could not look at it from this perspective.

Before concluding this paper I would like to say a few words about the limitations of Indian struggle for freedom for which the concept of united free India, for which thousands of Indian political workers suffered, was frustrated and the country was partitioned on communal lines in August, 1947. We have seen that the Indian struggle progressed through three distinct streams, viz., (i) nationalist-revolutionary movement; (ii) nationalist movement, based on the ideals of 'non-violence', led by Mahatma Gandhi; (iii) Marxist-revolutionary movement led by C.P.I. The tragedy was this that these three streams could not meet at a confluence to restructure the entire socio-political fabric of this country.[56] Though India had differences with China on different aspects, still we find that the marxist-revolutionaries led by the Communist Party of China could move together along with democratic-nationalist elements of the Kuominatang Party to establish a new democratic set up destroying semi-colonial and semi-feudal system of China; and, as a result, divided China was unified under Communist Party leadership.[57] Thus we find two different pictures

in India and China though both Mahatma Gandhi and Mao Tse-tung emerged almost at the same time.[58] In India, both the nationalist-revolutionaries and the marxist-revolutionaries believed in the theory of armed struggle. In spite of that they could not see eye to eye on a number of issues—national and international. As they failed to resolve their differences for a common cause like their Chinese counterparts, India became a victim of imperialist machinations. I think in discussing Indian struggle for freedom we must keep in view these two scenes so that we can make a proper assessment of the entire situation.

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   In 1861 Rajnarayan Bose made a determined effort "to turn the thoughts of the anglicised-educated Bengalis towards their own culture and customs." He propounded the theory of using force against the alien rulers and, towards this end, he founded a secret society with the object of delivering 'India from her bondage' (vide A.C. Gupta, *op. cit.*).
   From 1876 Basudeo Balwant Phadke secretly collected arms, imparted military training to his followers and collected funds by means of political dacoities so that he might liberate his motherland from the British. He was sentenced to transportation for life and died in 1883 at a premature age due to rigorous treatment in jail. The spark lighted by him was taken up by the Chapekar Brothers at the end of the 19th Century (vide R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*).
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3. R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, Chapter III.
4. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (Ed.), *Marxism and Indology*, Calcutta, 1981, p. 46; Saroj Mukhopadhyaya, *Duti Samaraniya Din* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1982. It is now revealed from records that the Communist Party of India was founded on October 17, 1920 at Taskhent. This Party began to function in India and by 1921 an all-India organizational structure was created. In Bengal, Muzaffar Ahmad took the initiative in propagating Marxist literature in 1920-21. In the 1920's the polemics between Lenin and M.N. Roy centred on national liberation struggle. S.A. Dange's *Gandhi Vs. Lenin* appeared in Bombay in 1921. M.N. Roy developed his attitude towards our national liberation movement and Gandhism in his work *India in Transition* with the collaboration of Abani Mukherjee (Geneva, 1922). For further information see also *Amar Jivan*

*O Bharater Communist Party* (in Bengali) by Muzaffar Ahmad, Calcutta, 1969.

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6. R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 579-93; See my Rashbehari Basu Memorial Lecture, published in *Anushilan Barta*, 1982-83.
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12. Bhupendra Nath Datta, *Bharater Dvitiya Swadhinata Sangram*, Pratham Khanda, (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1949, pp. 73-75.
13. Bipin Chandra, *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 8-9.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, Bipin Chandra wrote : "Apart from Gandhi, leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose as well as many Congress workers freely used Hindu symbols, myths and idioms : they found it difficult to bypass religion in their daily political practice." (Vide *Ibid.*, p. 4.).
16. S.K. Mitra, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-37.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.
19. *Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 30, pp. 1-2; S.K. Mitra, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-77.
20. For a detailed study see my paper Raja Subodh Chandra Mallik and His Times, in *Bengal Past and Present*, July-December, 1979, pp. 92-93, 131.
21. Aurobindo Ghose, *Bhawani Mandir*, in *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, Jayanti Number 15, August 15, 1956, Calcutta, pp. 14-27.
22. *Ibid.*, See also Files of *Bande Mataram* : *Sri Aurobindo*, Vols.
23. Bhupendra Nath Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
25. See my works *Bengali Buddhijibi O Bichchinnatabad* (in Bengali) and *Islam in Modern India*. I have discussed in detail the growth and development of Muslim exclusiveness in our country in these works.
26. Bhupendra Nath Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
27. *Sedition Committee Report, 1918*; *Diary of Hemendra Prasad Ghose*; S.K. Mitra, *op. cit.*, Sukomal Sen, *Working Class of India, History of Emergence and Movement, 1830-1970*, pp. 108-13.
28. Nalini Kanta Gupta, *Smritir Pata*, (Bengali), Calcutta, 1370 B.S., p. 33.
29. Eric Komarov, *India's Freedom Movement and the Soviet Union*, in *Soviet-Samiksha* (Bengali), Vol. 7, No. 44, September 30, 1972, p. 10. The Nationalist movement developed further in Bengal, Maharashtra and other parts of the country between 1905 and 1908, and speeches and writings of the Nationalists show that it was influenced by the Russian

Revolution of 1905-07 (vide *Ibid*).

30. For a detailed study see *Bengal Past and Present*, July-December, 1979.
31. *Alipore Bomb Case*, Sessions Court, List of Exhibits, p. 36.
32. S.K. Mitra, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
The Nationalists led by Aurobindo Ghose opposed the Moderates at the Session of the Midnapore District Conference on December 7, 1907 and left the Conference in a body. On December 9, 1907, the Nationalists held an open air Conference at Midnapore which was attended by one hundred delegates and three thousand people. The speakers clearly explained their reasons for secession and in this Conference "the original Nationalist resolutions including the one on *Swaraj*, the first *Swaraj* resolution, were passed unanimously." Maulavi Abdul Huq "presided over this first formal Nationalist Conference held in India." *The Bande Mataram* commented : "It was also the most memorable district Conference that has ever been held in Bengal." This was "indeed a landmark in the progress of the national movement in the country." (vide *Ibid*).
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20; See also Files of *Bande Mataram*, May 1907.
34. *Alipore Bomb Case*, Criminal, 1909, Case No. 20/09, p. 12.
35. *Ibid.*, *Exhibits*, Printed Exhibits 1226, 1076.
36. *Midnapore Case*, No. 61 of 1910, Nos. 4332-37.
37. *Ibid.*, Nos. 4332, 4342.
38. *Ibid.*, No. 4341; *Alipore Bomb Case*, Exhibit 1226.
39. *Alipore Bomb Case*, Exhibit 1163.
40. *Bengal Past and Present*, July-December, 1979, p. 137.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-38.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 138-40.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-41.
45. V.I. Lenin, *Inflammable Material in World Politics*, Published in *Proletary*, No. 33, July 23 August 5, 1908, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 15, Moscow, 1963, pp. 183-85.
46. Bhupendra Nath Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
47. See my Rashbehari Basu Memorial Lecture, in *Anushilan Barta*, 1982-83.
48. *Ibid.*, *Anushilan Barta*, Saturday, 12 February, 1983.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*
51. Ajoy Ghosh, *Bhagat Singh and His Comrades*, Bombay, 1945; See also works by Ananta Singh on the activities of the group led by Surjya Sen.
52. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. II (1935-47), Bombay, 1947, pp. 96-97; R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 579-93. In May 1939, Subhas Chandra Bose, President of the Indian National Congress, "Succinctly laid down the principles of national planning." But "this caused further annoyance to Mahatma Gandhi who was opposed to industrialisation."
53. P. Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, 115; R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 580-93; Naren Das, *Biplabigner Jijnasa* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1983.
54. Nicholas Mansergh, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. IV and VI; R.C.

Majumdar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, Chapter X. Also see my Rashbehari Basu Memorial Lecture in *Anushilan Barta.* Interesting materials are available in Mansergh's *Transfer of Power* (Vols. IV and VI). In a most secret note under the title *Recent Activities of Subhas Chandra Bose*, it was stated on July 14, 1943 that Subhas Chandra was engaged "in the imminent liberation of India with Axis help" and took preparation "for an armed revolt in India" (For a detailed study see Vol. IV, No. 37, pp. 74-75). From a note of the Home Department, Government of India, it was clear that the Government decided to treat Subhas Chandra as a 'war criminal.' Mr. R.F. Mudie, Home Member, wrote on 23-8-45 that Subhas Chandra "might then escape to Russia, as he did in 1940 . . . He might, of course, in certain circumstances be welcomed by the Russians." (See Vol. VI, No. 57 and other Numbers relating to it). The British Intelligence Department had an apprehension that Subhas Chandra had established contact with the Russian Government.

55. R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 368-69.
56. Subodh Roy (Edited), *op. cit.*; Ajoy Ghose, The Indian Bourgeoisie, *New Age*, No. 12, 1955.
57. Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, London, 1937; Edgar Snow, *Red China Today, The Other Side of the River*, London, pp. 67-69, 96-101.
58. Mahatma Gandhi returned to India in 1915 and since then actively took part in Indian politics. Mao-Tse-tung organised the students in 1915 and he played a leading part in the May 4 Movement of 1919. In 1918, Mao had joined a study group in Beijing and there first read some Marxist classics. By the summer of 1920, Mao considered himself a Marxist and in the following year he took part in founding the Chinese Communist Party.

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# THE IDEAL OF HUMAN UNITY

SANAT K. BANERGI

## THE DRIVE TOWARDS ECONOMIC CENTRALISATION

The unity of the external life of a nation needs also the unity and uniformity of the law and the judiciary under a single sovereign authority. Logically, the determination of its rules of life should be the first business of a society, But life develops under the pressure of forces and subconscient necessities, and not according to mental logic; its organisation by the self-conscious mind comes not at the beginning but towards the end.

The development of the self-conscious mind enables the society to perfect the whole organisation of its life by means of the state. The more the state and the society become synonymous, the more perfect is this organisation. The coming of democracy and socialism is a sign that society is preparing to be a freely and consciously self-regulating organism. Modern democracy and modern socialism however, are far yet from that goal; Facism and Nazism have cut out the "freely" in this formula.

In the early stages of society, there was no such thing as law, in its present sense. There was only a mass of binding habits fixed by the inner nature of the group-man and the pressure of his environment. They became institutions and crystallised into laws. These laws, moreover, made no distinctions between the political and the administrative, the social and the religious law. The ancient Jewish law and the law of Hindu India were of this type.

This ancient law was not fixed for all time; it grew, with the natural development of social habits in response to changing ideas and more and more complex needs. There was no constituted legislative authority, although the prophets and Rishis and kings and jurists exercised a determining influence according to their power and capacity. The king in India was an administrator and seldom the legislator.

Tradition did ascribe this ancient law to an original legislator—a Manu, Moses, Lycurgus. But modern research has discredited such ascriptions. Manu in the Indian Puranic tradition stands as a symbol of the larger but to us subconscient mentality of the race. An embodied Manu, a living Moses or Muhammad simply acts as a spokesman for the beings of this larger mind with which he gets into touch in a state of trance. This is quite different from the way modern man makes his laws through a constituted authority, by a rational process.

This rational process implied the creation of a central authority which gradually takes over the separated parts of the social activity. As first, this authority was the king, elective or hereditary.

Originally, he was only a war leader, and at home the head of the elders or the strong men but not the principal determinant of the nation's action. In war, his authority was supreme; at home he was only the executive ruler.

In the ancient monarchies, the conduct of war and peace had been centralised in the king; he was free to carry it out according to his own ideas and interests. A vestige of this survives even in modern European governments. They conduct their foreign policies according to their will and by means of a secret diplomacy subject only to a general criticism by the public or parliament. The latter are effectively consulted, whether for war or peace, only at the last moment. The demand fer real parliamentary control of foreign policy and even for an open diplomacy is a sign of the progress towards a real democracy.

The central authority had a more difficult task in taking over the functions of internal government, for it had to meet many opposing interests. But it was bound in the end to control the executive and administrative functions, which consist in the main of the financial, the executive proper and the judicial powers.

The financial power implies the right to control the public

purse and determine public expenditure. Whoever has this financial power naturally wields the sovereign authority in the state. Monarchy in its impulse towards despotic control has always sought to engross this power, even to the extent of confiscation and despoliation without judicial process. A ruler who has to bargain with his subjects over the amount and the methods of taxation can hardly claim to be the sole sovereign.

That is why the supreme political instinct of the English people chose the question of taxation as the vital issue in their struggle with the monarchy. Once they had won this battle, with the defeat of the Stuarts in Parliament, the transference of sovereignty from a despotic monarchy, first to the aristocracy, next to the bourgeoisie and finally to the entire people was only a question of time. In France on the other hand, the monarchy had retained this power over the public purse. It was the mismanagement of the public purse and the unwillingness to tax the enormous wealth of the aristocracy and clergy and the crushing taxation of the people that led to the Revolution.

In advanced modern countries, this control over the purse is in the hands of an authority which claims to represent the will of the people, and there is no appeal against its decisions. But even so, it is questions, not of taxation, but of the proper organisation and administration of the economic life of the society which are preparing the revolutions of the future.

## THE DRIVE TOWARDS LEGISLATIVE AND SOCIAL CENTRALISATION AND UNIFORMITY

The unity and uniformity of judicial administration, on the criminal as well as on the civil side, complete the gathering of the essential powers of administration into the hands of the State when it is substituting itself for the natural organic society. Of these two the criminal side is the more important and immediate necessity, both for the maintenance of order and internal peace and for the State to crush all rebellion against itself. This implies the sole power to constitute tribunals, appoint, salary and remove judges, and to lay down or modify the law relating to crimes, property, marriage and other matters concerning the public order of society.

The need for unity and uniformity was not felt in the early

state of society, which allowed of a great complexity and variation in the customary law, and in the judicial process as in the ancient Indian village jury, or the unwieldy juries of ancient Rome and Athens. As the State idea develops, the king becomes the source and sanction of these various jurisdictions and at the same time the highest court of law. But the power of the king is often hedged by a religious sanction given to the customary law, by the separate jurisdiction of an ecclesiastical authority, or by a code of law in the keeping of Brahmin jurists or Muslim divines who remain the ultimate authority on moot points of the law.

In Europe, the independent jurisdiction of the Church was in course of time subordinated and finally gave way to the sole jurisdiction of the State. England was the only country where arbitrary power of the State in the sphere of justice was successfully curbed by the firm tradition of an independent judiciary and the jury system. In other countries which left the judiciary under the control of the executive, the same end was roughly achieved by making the executive responsible to the society as a whole.

The uniformity of the law develops on lines different from that of the judicial administration.

Originally, law was fixed by custom, and where it merely expressed the social habits of the people, there was considerable variety of custom, as in India where it allowed even a family to develop its own variations. The general lines of the law as well as the variations were fixed, not by the reason but by an instinct of the grouplife.

The first signs of the reason taking the lead were to be found in the tendency to codification. In its early stages, the codes are merely a floating mass of *decreta*, precedents embodying much of customary law; even when, as in India, they take the strict code form, they represent merely an ossification of custom. At a later stage, the reason take the lead and laws are codified under the orders of a sovereign authority which fixes the *cadres*, both of the political constitution and of the civil and criminal law. This is a sign that the society is ready for the rational; as opposed to the vaguely instinctive stage of its development.

But before arriving at this stage of social development, the question arises : who is to be the State. It is to be a king with his counsellors, or a theocratic, autocratic or plutocratic governing class ? Or will it be a body seemingly representative of the whole

society ? Or will it be a compromise between some or all of these possibilities ?

The whole course of constitutional history has turned upon this question. And through all its vicissitudes, the way has been prepared for the coming of the democratic State.

The self-conscious evolution of society begins with the king, his council, the priesthood, and the assembly of freemen as the chief constituent elements, with the king as the keystone of the whole structure. But he cannot be the chief or sole legislative authority, until he has got rid of the assembly or is no longer obliged to convoke it. Yet, when he has succeeded in doing this, at this apparent point of his highest success, his failure begins. The reason for this paradox is that in engrossing the legislative power, the king goes beyond his true function and capacity, his *dharma.*

Legislation, social development, culture, religion, even the determination of the economic life of the people are outside his proper sphere, which consists in the ordered maintenance of the merely external activities of the society. Those others are for the society as a whole to determine, either in the old instinctive or intuitive manner, or if the reason must come into play, by a governing body which more or less adequately represents the reason and will of the whole society. A governing class may for a time represent a noble or vigorous part of that reason and will; but it must in the end give way to a democratic form of government. Certainly, modern democracy with its rule of the majority and the vicious method of party government which it implies, is far from being perfect, or even the ultimate stage of social evolution. And it is likely to be overtaken by a prematurely socialistic endeavour. But socialism and democracy are signs that the society is growing into a full self-consciousness.

If, as would appear from the past history of the European nations, legislation were to deal mainly with politics, constitutional law, and the principle and process of administration, and only to a minimum degree with society and economics, monarchy and aristocracies might well discharge this function well. But, as history bears out, kings and aristocracies have proved to be inefficient legislators. It is when the society as a whole begins to shape the framework of its life by a self-conscious action of its reason and will that it takes the first step towards realising something like the Utopia of the thinker.

No monarch can determine, by his arbitrary power, the whole social or economic life of the nation; it is much too larger for him. Neither he nor a governing class or even a theocracy or priesthood can determine the religious life of the people; it is too deep and intimate to the individual's soul. Nor can the monarch determine the national culture; all he can do in this respect is to fix for it a turn which by its own force of tendency it was already taking. Even exceptional rulers, like Chandragupta, Asoka or Akbar, Charlemagne, Augustus or Napoleon, can do no more than fix certain new institutions which the time needed; when they attempt more, they fail. Only the rare Avatar or prophet can speak truly of his divine right to mould the entire life of the society.

Yet the attempt had to be made, if society was to advance to its self-conscious and rational stage of development. Monarchy, aristocracy, theocracy represented the first idea of the human reason and will to govern nature in the human mass by intelligent choice. Its idea is false or only a half-truth or temporary truth, because the real business of the advanced class or individual is progressively to enlighten and train the whole body to do consciously its own work and not eternally do things for it. There is a place for the monarchical, aristocratic or theocratic elements in the perfect society to be, but there these would fulfil their natural function in a conscious body, not maintain and propel an unconscious mass.

The difficulty which the ruling man or class had to face was that they could take up the moral mechanical part of the life of the society, but could not lay their hands on its soul, and until they did that their mastery would not be complete. Two methods were in the main adopted to secure this complete mastery. One, the negative approach, was to inhibit more or less completely, freedom of thought, speech, association and individual and associated action of the community, and to encourage and patronise only such thought and culture and activities as accepted, flattered and helped the governing absolutism. The other, the positive method was to control the religious life of the society with the priest as helper of the king; for until recent times, religion powerfully moulded the whole life of the individual and society at least in all Asiatic countries. State religions are an expression of this endeavour. But a State religion is an artificial monstrosity

and kills in the end the religious spirit.

These attempts of absolutism, however seemingly successful for a time, are foredoomed to failure, either by a revolt of the social being or by its weakness and death or stagnation, such as overtook Greece, Rome, the Islamic peoples, China, India. A saving spiritual, social and political revolution is the only issue out.

But absolutism had its use. It prepared the way for the idea and actuality of the absolutist socialistic State. It gave a clear idea of an intelligently self-governing society. The conscious and organised unity, the regularised efficiency on uniform and intelligent principles, the rational order and self-governed perfectioning of a developed society : this has been the whole rational of modern progress. Unity and uniformity are its principal trend,—the management of life by a logical intelligence and unified will.

This is the basis of the democratic idea and socialism is the complete expression of this idea. Uniformity of the social and economic processes, the fundamental equality of all, State management of the whole social and economic life of the community, uniformity of culture secured by means of a State education organised upon scientific lines, a unified, uniform and perfectly organised government and administration representing and acting for the whole social being : these are the accepted forms of expressing the socialist idea, which is being sought to be realised in one way or another by the Utopian thinker.

Human science will, it seems, bring about perfection or at least some approach to perfection, in the collective human life.

## WORLD-UNION OR WORLD-STATE

The history of the State is, in principle, the growth of strict unification and a growing uniformity in administration, legislation, social and economic life and culture, education and language, with a central authority becoming more and more the determining power. This central authority passes ultimately from the hands of the central executive man or the capable class into those of a body claiming to represent the will of the whole community.

The growth of the State marks the evolution from an organic and natural to a rational and mechanically organised state of society. A rational, ordered, strict uniformity replaces a loose

oneness whose efficiency is that of life developing with a certain spontaneity. A carefully planned law and ordered regulation replace the organic will of the society expressed in a body of customs and institutions. In the last perfection of the State, a carefully devised giant machinery productive and regulative replaces the vigour and fertility of life.

The State is the masterful but arbitrary and intolerant science and reason of man that successfully takes the place of the intuitions and evolutionary experimentations of Nature.

The eventual organisation of a World-State out of the still loose but already existing natural organic unity of mankind must be the outcome of an attempt to unite the race by political and administrative means. Science, commerce and rapid communications have drawn together the once disparate masses of humanity into a single whole which has already a common vital and is rapidly forming a common mental existence. The Great War gave the needed shock to reveal the necessity and create the will for a closer and organised union, not only in the mind of the thinker but in the general consciousness of mankind.

The World-State must now either be brought about by a mutual understanding or by a series of new and disastrous shocks, inevitable crises through which Nature will effect the working out of the necessity which she has evolved. Two alternate possibilities present themselves : a World-State founded upon the principle of centralisation and uniformity, a mechanical and formal unity involving in the process a maximum of loss and suffering through the clash of national and imperial egoisms, or a World-Union founded upon the principle of liberty and variation in a free and intelligent unity.

These two possibilities we have now successively to consider.

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## INTEGRAL REALISATION*

ARABINDA BASU

Sri Aurobindo often refused any claim to the title of philosopher. However, he did say that he had introduced a new path of yoga. At the same time he also warned that those who wished to understand the principles and the aims of his yoga, which he called the 'Integral Yoga' should be more concerned with the truth contained in it rather than its novelty. His main work on yoga is entitled "The Synthesis of Yoga.' It should not be thought that the integral yoga is an eclectic system which borrows elements from different yogas and weld them together into a rather artificial unity. The integral yoga is an independent spiritual path, comprehensive and synthetic, because it includes within its aims and objectives all the goals of the different traditional yogas. It has its capital differences from them the chief of which is its integral character. The chief instrument of the yoga is also other than what it is in the various spiritual paths. As we proceed in our brief exposition of this new yoga, these points will, we hope, clearly emerge.

Sri Aurobindo gives a rational account of what he considers as the essence of yoga. It is nothing unnatural but has the same relation with the states and forces of the inner being and nature of man as the positive sciences have with forces of objective

*Sri Aurobindo Annual Memorial Lecture delivered in March 1977 at the University of Bombay.

physical Nature. Yoga also proceeds by observation, experiment and confirmation of results by repeated experiments with those results. Needless to say that the experiments are not carried out exactly in the same way as in the positive sciences for the simple reason that intelligence, emotion and will, and what is more important of this context, the soul in man, are not observable as a piece of matter and its motions are. Nevertheless, yoga is not a sheer belief in certain more than normal claims about the nature of man and that of the ultimate Reality and a theory about what man can realise as the supreme value. Its methods are primarily introspective or objectives but not fanciful of imaginary.

The word 'yoga' has two primary meanings. First, union; second, a method or discipline. If it be asked what is the union that yoga stands for, the most simple answer will be : of man and God. We are not at the moment dealing with the concept of God. Indeed, there are systems of yoga which do not aim at any such union, because there is no place for God in them. Raja-Yoga of which the Yogasutra of Patanjali is the fundamental and classical work, has no conception of God as the kind of being and reality as that word normally indicates.[1] The Buddhist idea and experience of Nirvana can also be cited in the connection.[2]

The Integral Yoga accepts the idea of union of the human soul with the Divine Soul, it however does not preclude that of the identity of the individual soul with the supreme Self. Nor does it reject the Buddhist experience of Nirvana.

Be that as it may, let us go back to a brief explanation of the nature of yoga. A yoga starts with the idea that some part of man's nature can be rearranged and reconstituted in such a manner that its old laws do not hold good any more. Hatha-Yoga for example, is based upon the concept that the flow of the vital energy through the nervous system can be radically changed and that, consequently, its current becomes unimpeded, smooth and enhanced. The result of this is a great change in the condition of the whole nervous system because of which the old physical habits no longer hold sway. Health, longivity and super-normal physical and vital powers are obtained. Raja-Yoga proceeds on the basis that our normal, confused and indisciplined mental functions can be radically changed. Not only can they be controlled, they can also be brought to a state of cessation. The result of such constriction of the mental modes, *citta-vṛtti-nirodha*,

is the release of a higher intellectual capacity which enables the practising yogi to know the true nature of the Purusha, the spiritual Soul as distinguished from Prakriti, the unconscious and mechanical Nature which is the source of this universe. The Integral Yoga also in a similar way studies the constituent parts and planes of man's inner being and nature, discovers their mutual relalions and the reason why they are at discord with each other, finds out the way to harmonise them so that they can function in concord. It must be pointed out, however, that the view of man that this Yoga takes is much more complex than it is in the other yogas. It must also be made clear that the harmony of the different parts and planes of our being is not the *main* objective of the yoga, which is, of course, to know and be united with the Divine beyond the world and within it. That knowledge, when obtained, says Sri Aurobindo, will effect the perfect harmony of the different aspects of our being and nature.

But the Divine has many aspects some of which are known to the other yogas. The aim of the traditional yogas is to know the ultimate Reality in one or two of its aspects, but that of the integral yoga is the experience and realisation of all the aspects.

We can only briefly touch upon the different aspects of the Divine. As it is in itself, the Brahman is experienced as Transcendent, Universal and Individual. In its transcendent aspect the Brahman is realised as beyond its own assertion as the Self and Soul and the Lord of the universe. But this does not mean that it is not that Self. The Brahman is the inmost Reality of everything in the world as well as the all-containing yet all-exceeding Whole. At the same time the Brahman manifests itself as an individual centre of self-knowledge, self-action and self-enjoyment. This is the Divine as and in the individual, the Individual Divine. The sadhaka of the integral yoga includes in his spiritual objectives the realisation of his self as identical with the Transcendent, in union with the universal Divine of which it is a portion and also as the individual Divine.

At the same time the integral yoga has as another of its objective the attainment of the direct knowledge of the Divine as consciousness-Force and its becomings as the categories that constitute the world. The first and foremost principle is the Supermind which is the real seed of the universe. It is not only substance

but also the integral Knowledge and the infallible Will. As such it is also the self-knowledge and world-knowledge of Sachchidananda Brahman. From this arise by progressive limitation mind, life and body. There are different ranges of each of these. The integral yoga seeks the complete and detailed knowledge of these ranges and their inter-connections. The realisation of the relation of three lower categories, namely, mind, life and matter—which are products of Ignorance, because in these three the knowledge of the Reality is concealed—with the Supermind is also one of the aims of the yoga. All this knowledge is necessary for the realisation of its distinctive goal which is the transformation of the physical, vital and mental nature into their reality in the supramental supernature so that that could be manifested in them in the lower nature. This transformation, as has already been said, is indispensable for the most comprehensive experience of the Divine and for its integral realisation. To do this successfully and effectively requires a medium of knowledge which has not been tapped and utilised by the other yogas. This requirement brings in the idea of the evolution of consciousness.

In spiritual circles it is universally held that the mind cannot know the Reality. This is as far as it goes true. The Katha Upanishad, 2-3-12 says, 'Not with the mind has man the power to get God.' On the other hand, the same Upanishad, 2-1-1, also asserts, 'Through the mind must we understand that there is nothing in this world that really varies.' In other words, we must realise by the mind the unity of all multiplicity. These two statements seem to cancel each other. But from Sri Aurobindo's point of view, there is no contradiction here. What they really mean is that there are different ranges of the mental consciousness of which some are incapable of realising the Reality, while other levels of the mind are the instruments of direct knowledge of it. The human mind, normally subject to the senses and dependent on memory, comparison, judgment, etc., obviously cannot have direct experience of Brahman. On the other hand, the mind can be made almost entirely independent of the senses, calm and free and concentrated and it can develop receptivity in such a way that it can clearly reflect in it the Self or God or the Absolute. Sri Aurobindo also says that this explains why the different yogas proclaim the nature of the Reality in diverse manner. The higher ranges of the mind can be in touch with Truth, see it

directly and even effect changes in life to some extent by its power. Nevertheless, such visions are incomplete and not integral and their force is only partially effective. That is why Sri Aurobindo feels the need for attaining a level of consciousness capable of realising all the aspects of the Divine simultaneously and integrally. This new level of consciousness is what he calls the Supermind which, as said above, is the self-awareness and world-awareness of the Divine and the seed of the universe. It is the Real-Idea in the creative God's supreme consciousness of the world-to-be and thus of the manifestation of God as and in the universe. The four-fold aim of the integral yoga, namely, the supramental realisation of the complex nature of the Divine, the consequent transformation of our whole nature by the supramental Force, the resultant integral realisation of the Divine not only by our inmost spiritual soul but also by the external nature and the uninhibited manifestation of God in the world, necessarily makes its practice also extremely complex and demanding.

The transformation of our whole nature is the condition of the integral realisation. Such realisation includes that of the collective Divine also. There is a soul of a society or a nation or a country and the integral yoga includes in its aims the direct knowledge of the collective Narayana and his sovereign rule in society and eventually in humanity. The integral Yoga is both individual and collective. It envisages the evolution of a spiritual society which will be the external form of its collective Soul. Just as there are in the individual a separative ego and a unitive soul, so also a community has an ego and a Soul. The yoga, practised collectively, will enable human society to shed its ego and to live in and from its Soul.

The chief instrument of the Hatha-Yoga is the vital force in the body and that of the Raja-Yoga the basic mind-stuff *citta*, The three higher yogas, those of knowledge, devotion and action, respectively rely upon the purified intelligence seeking knowledge of the Self, purified emotions aspiring for the union with the Beloved, and purified will surrendered to the Master of Works. The Tantra, says Sri Aurobindo depends on the soul in the body as its chief instrument. The real sadhaka of the integral yoga is none of these. It is rather the soul in mind, the *monomaya purusa.* When the integral yogin makes considerable advance in his chosen path, a deeper being in him, the *caitya puruso*, the psychic being,

extends the scope of each of them. The integral yoga of knowledge not only does not repudiate the high experience of the Absolute as the sole reality, but also sees the same Brahman everywhere and in everything. Whatever is, is real and is so by the reality of the Brahman. All knowledge is eventually a discovery of the same one Reality in all multiplicity which is seen to be held in the essential unity of things, a Reality which Sri Aurobindo describes as a multiple unity. The integral yoga of devotion seeks complete union with the Beloved by utter submission and surrender of the sadhaka's old being and nature and eventually of his liberated soul too. It also at the same time aspires to extend the all-absorbing love for the Lord to all things and creatures in the world because it finds the same Lord in them. The integral yoga of action turns every work into a process of self-consecration, of a sacrifice dedicated to the Master of Works. Its aim is to see in all movements of Nature the activity of the Divine Will.

Here a few words on the Tantric Yoga will not be irrelevant. The philosophy of Tantra accepts Reality as Conscious-Force, the reality of the world as a result of the descent of that Force into the *prthvitattva,* the earth principle or Matter through various levels of progressive veiling of its own Consciousness. This veiling of consciousness is followed by the unveiling of it which is called the ascent of Consciousness. At a certain stage of the descent of consciousness, the ultimate Reality, called Shiva or Shakti in the Tantric Philosophies, becomes the limited and bound individual soul. The consummation of the ascent of consciousness is the recognition by the bound soul of itself as the unbound Shiva who in the fullness of his glory enjoys the living sense of being the integral 'I', that is, one with everything. Of this sadhana, says Sri Aurobindo, the chief instrument is the soul in the body lying asleep at the base of the spinal column. The Tantric yogas add as one of its aims *bhukti,* enjoyment of the state of *mukti,* liberation. The release of various powers as a result of the realisation of the universal Force which is secretly conscious on all levels of world existence is a striking consequence of the Tantric yogas. But they do not have any perception of the individual Divine as Sri Aurobindo understands that concept. Individuality in the Tantric philosophies is a result of assuming self-limitation on the part of Shiva. When the recognition of

itself as Shiva dawns on the soul, it ceases to retain its individuality. Also, the Tantras do not envisage the complete spiritualisation of the body, far less entertain it as a goal of Yoga.

The purpose of the Divine Will in the world, says Sri Aurobindo, is the evolution of consciousness into the supramental knowledge and the consequent perfect transformation of the secret consciousness in mind, life and body resulting in the most radical change of man's mental, vital and physical nature. A being having the supramental knowledge and will and also a transformed nature is the superman. The cosmic evolution is not designed by God to evolve only one or two such beings. Starting with a group of men there will be the emergence of a new race of such beings whose collective life will be the Divine Life. However difficult of achievement may this goal be, the integral yogin will march towards it with a patient determination and unsentimental optimism.

A sincere and intense aspiration for the Divine, a constant rejection of the movements of the lower nature and the surrender of the whole being are the three major steps of the yoga. Constant watchfulness over the movements of our external nature, eliminating those which stand in the way of union with God and invoking the effective help of the Divine Force and accepting it in the spirit of complete submission are the indispensable means of progress in the sadhana. We have said before that the psychic being as the real sadhaka of this yoga. Now it is gradually seen that this Divine Force causes the required real changes in the human nature. And that is brought about in the last analysis by the Supramental Knowledge-Will of the Force. In fact, as the sadhaka progresses and gives himself without reserve to the Divine and accepts his highest Force, the Divide himself takes over the charge of the sadhana and thus becomes the real sadhaka.

This does not mean that there is no place for personal effort in the yoga. Especially, constant vigilance and resolute rejection of the movements of nature which are contrary to progress are to be assiduously practised. The surrender also cannot be inert but must be conscious and willing. Personal effort and grace are the two things by which the psychic being can soar into the clear firmament of the spiritual and supramental consciousness. But however high it may soar, it does not lose sight of its earthly home, namely, the external nature. It brings down with it the

supramental knowledge and will and delight into that home and makes it a new mansion of harmonious proportions built of the materials of nature but transformed into the elements of divine supernature.

The integral yoga accepts and embrace life not as it is now,—a product of the Ignorance,—but as potentially capable of an integral transformation. It is a yoga which is at the same time other-worldly and this-worldly. It is other-worldly in the sense that it is not satisfied with this world and life in it and seeks knowledge and mastery of the ultimate Reality and also of the subtle worlds so that it can change human existence here into a divine existence. And it is this-worldly because it is intensely interested in this world and its transformation. Aiming at first at the marriage of the sky of the highest mental consciousness and the earth of the densest physical consciousness which are linked by the air of the vital energies, it appeals to the Sun of the supramental Knowledge-Will to effectuate this union which can only be accomplished if the sky and the air and the earth consent to radical and complete change of their ordinary nature into their real quality which is Divine.

To know, possess and be possessed by the Divine in the whole of our being and nature, to know directly and integrally God and the world, to convert the universe into a playground of the Eternal Child, to help evolve man into superman or the divine man—this is the objective of the integral yoga. It sees the world as the venue of a progressive manifestation of God, which is the same as the evolution of the Divine in Matter and the fulfilment of Nature's secret aspiration perfectly to create a being who will embody the discarnate Spirit and walk on the earth with a living and conscious body. For this consummation of the evolution of consciousness in the world,

"The Ideal must be Nature's common truth,
The body illumined with the indwelling God,
The heart and mind feel one with all that is,
A conscious soul live in a conscious world."[3]

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Patanjali accepts the idea of *isvara* as a unique Person, but not as the creater of the world or the dispenser of man's destiny. All souls or purushas suffer from five *klesah*-s or afflictions—ignorance, egoism, desire for and attachment to pleasure, aversion to things, and fear of death. Embodied souls are also engaged in all kinds of activities the mature fruits of which they have to experience. In their minds there are impressions of the conscious mental modes. Ishwara, however, is forever free from the five afflictions, never indulges in activity and therefore does not experience their fruits nor has he any impressions of conscious modes because unlike embodied souls, he has no mind or body. Besides these distinctions between the ordinary embodied purushas and the unique Purusha or Ishwara, he is also the eternal Teacher. But let us emphasize that he is not in any way the manifester or ruler of the world.
2. Nagarjuna, the great Madhyamika philosopher, clearly says that there are two orders of truth, the phenomenal and the noumenal or ultimate (*Madhyamika-Sastra*, Ch. 24, Karikas 8-9). This is a clear statement of Madhyamika's acceptance of a transcendent Reality. However, it would not be correct to identify this Reality with what is normally designated as God, for it is not a Personal Being or a creative or a creative Deity. Nor is there any idea of the individual soul attaining union with this noumenal Reality, for Buddhism does not believe in the reality of the individual soul.
3. Savitri, Book I, Canto 5.

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# SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER'S CONCEPT OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION

O.P. MALHOTRA

Sri Aurobindo was a versatile universal genius whose writings reveal the range, consistency and integrality of his living thought and his long labour for a new India and a new world. As an educationist, his theory of Integral Education provides an answer to the contemporary educational crisis in India and the world. He was written with first hand experience calling for a revival of the basic values of the ancient system of education though in changed forms suited to the new conditions of the day. His and the Mother's writings on education are seminal books which if studied with attention could give much food for thought to those today who are concerned with the deterioration in the educational standards all over the world. They are unique in the field for the thoroughness with which they tackle the problem of education and invest it with an altogether new content and significance.

According to the Mother, real education starts even in the prenatal stage and continues up to the very day of the death of the physical body. Experiments are being made on these lines in the International Centre of Education run by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Here the students and the teachers from over fifteen countries in the world are participating in the project. Sri Aurobindo was quite careful to note that, in truth, the real and only Guru is the inner Guide, the luminous Dweller in the heart, the Divine within, of whom the human Guru is but the representative

or external manifestation. It is said, "The teachers shows the way : the Guru is the way." Sri Aurobindo fulfilled wonderfully the description of the Guru. Perfectly manifesting the truth of his own teachings, his external life remained simple, natural, human to the end. The divine light burned quietly : the life divine was lived for all who had eyes to see, a fact which can be recalled in the following lines from *Savitri* :

"God shall grow up while the wise man talk and sleep
For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done."

*(Book I, Canto IV)*

According to Sri Aurobindo, "The true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find the deeper self, the real psychic entity within." He was a critic of the European system of education as it was introduced in India. He was a champion of national education suited to Indian traditions and conditions. He presented a new approach to the problem of education from the standpoint of Indian psychology. He emphasized the spiritual aspect in the development of the individual. He found fault with the English system of education which had disastrous effects on the body, mind and character of the youth of the country. He attributed these defects to the insufficient knowledge of human psychology and corresponding evils of strain and cramming on the minds of people. He described the western style of education in India as 'the practice of teaching by snippets' resulting in the shallowness, discursive lightness and fickle mutability of the average Indian youth. He deplored the lack of emphasis on the literature and history of the nation in the curriculum. The main defects of the prevailing system of education are too much emphasis on examinations, their faulty structure and defective working, the over-burdened curricula, the emphasis on cramming and reproduction of memorized answers, lack of mental, physical and moral training to the young students. All this results in the growing indiscipline in the student community, the meaninglessness of educational qualifications and certificates,-the mental and moral corruption of the so-called educated classes. Since our educational system is big and large, slavishly copied from the western models, a rethinking about it has become quite imperative in the changed

context.

The Aurobindonean concept of Integral Education envisages the training of the senses, of moral and mental habits, and finally of the logical faculty among the young students. A healthy body and a health moral character form the essential ingredients of this scheme of national education. Sri Aurobindo considered the true basis of education as the study of human mind, infant, adolescent and adult. In the Indian context he epitomized the problem of education as to give an education as comprehensive as the European and more thorough, without the evils of strain and cramming. The chief aim of such a scheme of education is to help the growing soul to draw out the best and make it perfect for a noble use. The role of the teacher here is not as an instructor or a task master but as a helper and a guide. The spontaneous urge to develop the faculties of mind is the first principle of education. Greatest emphasis is placed on the ability of the individual mind to rouse interest, sharpen intellect and find out knowledge for himself. He believed that everyone has in him something divine. He visualized individual mind as a particle of universal cosmic mind. Greatest stress is laid on the right use of all the senses by co-ordination of various sense organs. Psychic or spiritual education is the unique feature of this scheme. Concern for the spirit remained the most important element of Aurobindonean thought and forms the corner-stone of the system of Integral Education. The Aurobindonean ideal of education is to prepare the individual ultimately for the highest objects of existence—the life of individuality, humanity and divinity. It devotes the early period of childhood for the mastery over the mother-tongue, development of the faculty of imagination, instinct for words, dramatic abilities, ideas and fancy. Its main concern is to train the mind to be a seeker of true knowledge. Yogic practices, therefore, form an essential element of this national system of education.

Sri Aurobindo's scheme of national education contains extremely valuable suggestions for the re-orientation of the whole system of primary and secondary education. His theory and practice of integral Education includes all the five aspects of educational life—the physical, the vital (moral), the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. It is high time now that his ideals on education should be taken up seriously and made the basis of

educational reconstruction in India and the world. The prophetic vision of Sri Aurobindo—the educationist, provides the sure and practical remedy for the disillusionment with the existing set up of education everywhere.

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## SRI AUROBINDO AS I KNEW HIM : MINSTREL OF LIGHT AND DHARMA*

DILIP KUMAR ROY

Goethe wrote in a poem :

Freuet euch des wahren Scheins,
Euch des ernsten Spieles :
Kein Lebendiges ist ein Eins,
Immer ist's ein Vieles.

Rejoice in this game of true make-believe
Nothing on earth is what it seems to us.
All that strikes the eye as of a piece
Is, in essenee, mystic—multitudinous.

Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me in a letter, fully endorsing this profound observation of Goethe : "Nobody can understand himself or human nature if he does not perceive the multi-personality of the human being."

Sri Aurobindo himself was a luminous corroboration of the truth of this multimoodedness of an evolved human being, having flowered out in life as a poet, savant, revolutionary, philosopher, Yogi, critic of life, commentator of scriptures, lover of man, mystic and Messiah par excellence. I will endeavour in my brief discourse today to touch upon some of these diverse aspects of his

*Lecture delivered at the Poona University.

astonishing personality.

He made his mark in a way that can well be described as miraculous. But then he really spoke of himself when he described King Ashwapathy, Savitri's father, as one who "made of miracle a normal act."[1] In fact, he was all his life an emphatic contradiction of the rationalist's pronouncement that a man is, in the last analysis, a product of his heredity plus environment. His whole life is an instance of "a thorn breaking out into a rose." How else could one explain his genius of transforming life's difficulties into opportunities at every turn ? His Anglicised father, Dr. K.D. Ghose held Indian culture in contempt and wanted his sons to be completely insulted even from their mother-tongue, Bengali. So Sri Aurobindo began his English education at the Loretto Convent School in Darjeeling at barely five years of age and then, after two years was sent, along with his brother Manmohan, to England where they stayed with an English family. In England he had no contact at all with any Indian friend with the result that he completely forgot his mother-tongue. He studied Latin and Greek in which he wrote poems and scored record marks in Cambridge and passed his Tripos in the first class. His incredible genius was admired by his tutors, the more so as he had gone to Cambridge on a scholarship. He also passed the I.C.S. Examination but did not want to enter Government service. His father had given him the name Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose and in England he learned besides Latin and Greek, German, French and Italian. But his *grand passion* was English in which he turned out poems as easily as a juggler produces rabbits from his sleeves. He returned to India in 1983 and was appointed Professor (later Vice-Principal) at the college in Baroda, where he learned Bengali and Sanskrit. But the miracle of miracles was that a youth who had had no grounding in Indian culture and spiritual traditions flashed out overnight as a fire-brand revolutionary and left his high post to plunge straightaway into the vortex of politics and, after accepting Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak as the All India leader of the Revolutionary movement,[2] worked with him whole-heartedly and called for boycott of foreign goods, passive resistance and civil disobedience, adopted subsequently by Mahatma Gandhi in his great clarion-call to non-co-operation.

Apropos, I may quote here, with my annotations, a relevant letter Sri Aurobindo wrote to me years ago in Pondicherry : I have

a two-fold object in view : first, to underline his outlook on karma which he accepted as a yoga, as defined by Krishna and secondly, to delineate his exquisite humour in all its native charm.

The letter was written in answer to an urgent request by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who asked me to induce Sri Aurobindo to contribute an article on philosophy to be included in a book on philosophy he was going to bring out in the West. I was overjoyed and urged Gurudev to smile obligingly on the noble invitation of a noble soul.

But Sri Aurobindo was not to be cajoled : he was adamant. "Look here !" he wrote back. "Do these people expect me to turn myself again into a machine for producing articles ?" . . .

> "And philosophy !" Let me tell you in confidence that I never, never, never was a philosopher—although I have written philosophy, which is another story altogether. I knew precious little about philosophy before I did the yoga and came to Pondicherry—I was a poet and a politician, not a philosopher ! How I managed to do it and why ? First, because Paul Richard proposed to me to co-operate in a philosophical review—and as my theory was that a yogi ought to be able to turn his hand to anything, I could not very well refuse : and then he had to go to war and left me in the lurch with sixty-four pages a month of philosophy all to write by my lonely self ! Secondly, because I had only to write down in the terms of the intellect all that I had observed and come to know in practising Yoga daily and the philosophy was there, automatically. But that is not being a philosopher !"
> "I don't know how to excuse myself to Radhakrishnan—for I can't say all that to him. Perhaps you can find a formula for me ? Perhaps : 'so occupied, not a moment for any other work, can't undertake because he might not be able to carry out his promise.' What do you say ?"

I wrote what I could to Dr. Sarvapalli but he importuned. So once again I wrote to Gurudev imploring him to unbend. In the end I even tried to coax him : "Your name, Sir, is not yet known to the West and Dr. Radhakrishnan will give you wide publicity, fancy that ! Besides, he is right and rational. . . etc."

But he stayed adamant and wrote back :

"As to Radhakrishnan, I do not care whether he is right or wrong in his eagerness to get the contribution from me. But the first fact is that it is quite impossible for me to write philosophy to order. If something comes to me of itself, I can write, if I have time. But I have no time. I had some thought of writing to Adhar Das pointing out that he was mistaken in his criticism of my ideas about consciousness and intuition and developing briefly what were my real views about these things. But I have never been able to do it. I might as well think of putting the moon under my arm, Hanuman-like—although in his case it was the sun—and going for a walk. The moon is not availablc and the walk is not possible. It would be the same if I promised anything to Radhakrishnan—it would not be done, and that would be much worse than a refusal.

"And the second fact is that I do not care a button about having my name in any blessed place. I was never ardent about fame even in my political days; I preferred to remain behind the curtain, push people without their knowing it and get things done. It was the confounded British Government that spoiled my game by prosecuting me and forcing me to be publicly known as a 'leader'. Then again I don't believe in advertisement except for books, and in propaganda except for politics and patent medicines. But for serious work it is poison. It means either a stunt or a boom, and stunts and booms exhaust the thing they carry on their crests and leave it lifeless and broken, high and dry on the shores of nowhere—or it means a movement. A movement in the case of a work like mine means the founding of a school or a sect or some other damned nonsense. It means that hundreds or thousands of useless people join in and corrupt the work or reduce it to a pompous farce from which the Truth that was coming down recedes into secrecy and silence. It is what has happened to the 'religions' and is the reason of their failure. If I tolerated a little writing about myself, it is only to have a sufficient counter-weight in that amorphous chaos, the public mind, to balance the hostility that is always roused by the presence of a new dynamic Truth in this world of ignorance. But the utility ends there and too much advertisement would defeat the object. I am perfectly 'rational', I assure you, in

my methods and I do not proceed merely on my personal dislike of fame. If and insofar as publicity serves the Truth, I am quite ready to tolerate it; but I do not find publicity for its own sake desirable."

And yet he went on writing reams and reams of letters to such as we—for hours on end and for years and years !

Yes, to our reason he was baffling, although he claimed that he was "perfectly rational." But I find it difficult to take him at his word because I have not yet been able to find a clue to the mystery of his strange personality which not only drew us to his Yoga but made us cleave to his all but invisible self inspite of the enormous hypnotic pull of multitudinous life outside. But to give a few more instances of how subtly he led us on to "discuss" things with him and in what a carefree way !

"O Guru", I wrote, "I enclose a fine poem of Nishikanta's entitled, *The Yawning West*. Incidentally, I was telling him yesterday about Europe's frantic drive for the charnel-house in a fit of 'rationalised lunacy', as Russell puts it in his latest book, *In Praise of Idleness*. There he laments the imminent devastation of the coming War with the consequent holocaust of the finest ideals cherished by a handful of dreamers. Let me quote to you a few passages from his book which I wish my activist friend would ponder a little.

"After castigating compulsory military service, boy-scouts, the dissemination of political passion by the Press" etc. Russell girds at the blind restlessness of pugnacious activism thus :

'We are all more aware of our fellow-citizens then we used to be, more anxious, if we are virtuous, to do them good, and in any case to make them do us good. We do not like to think of any one lazily enjoying life, however refined may be the quality of his enjoyment. We feel that everybody ought to be doing something to help on the great cause—whatever it may be—the more so as so many bad men are working against it and ought to be stopped. We have not the leisure of mind, therefore, to acquire any knowledge except such as will help us fight for whatever it may happen to be that we think important.'

"O Guru, what, I wonder, will be X's rejoinder to this sarcasm of Russell directed against his darling activism which, thanks to its blindness wedded to greedy self-aggrandizement, is today crushing out our delicate soul-aspirations for all that is noble and beautiful in life ?. . ."

"But Dilip", he wrote back promptly, "you forget that X is a politician and the rationality of politicians has, perforce, to move within limits; if they were to allow themselves to be as clear-minded as Russell, their occupation would be gone ! It is not everybody who can be as cynical as a Birkenhead or as philosophical as a C.R. Das and go on with political reason or political make-believe inspite of knowing what it all came to, from arrivism in the one and patriotism in the other case."

Although he was appointed Principal of the National College, at heart he was a revolutionary first and last. He edited two dailies in which he wrote fiery articles week after week, besides speaking about India's ideals in meetings all over India, electrifying the country. Naturally, the British Government took alarm and in 1908 arrested and detained him as an undertrial prisoner for a year at Alipore Central Jail.

It is not possible to speak about his multifarious achievements within the brief compass of a lecture, nor is it necessary as his greatness as a patriot, post and freedom-fighter has been fully recognised and is still gratefully remembered by all. Rabindranath gave him a magnificient tribute in one of his soul-stirring poems entitled *Namaskar*, Salutation, which was subsequently translated into English by Justice K.C. Sen and published in Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. To quote a few lines from this great poem :

Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee !
O friend, my country's friend, O voice incarnate, free,
Of India's soul ! No soft renown doth crown thy lot,
Nor pelf or careless comfort is for thee. . .

When I behold thy face, 'mid bondage pain and wrong
And black indignities, I hear the soul's great song
Of rapture unconfined, the chant the pilgrim sings
In which exultant hope's immortal splendour rings. . .
And so today I hear

The ocean's restless roar borne by the stormy wind
The impetuous fountain's dance riotous, swift and blind
Bursting its rocky cage—the voice of thunder deep
Awakening, like a clarion-call, the clouds asleep,
Amid this song triumphant, vast, that encircles me,
Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee. . .

And here is one of his moving speeches addressed to the students whom he hailed as India's future nation-builders :

"I wish to see some of you becoming great, great not for your own sakes, not that you may satisfy your own vanity, but great for her, to make India great, to enable her to stand up with head erect among the nations of the earth, as she did in days of yore when the world looked up to her for light. Even those who will remain poor and obscure, I want to see their very poverty and obscurity devoted to the Motherland. There are times in a nation's history when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else however high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our Motherland when nothing is dearer than her service, when everything else is to be directed to that end. If you will study, study for her sake; train yourselves body and mind and soul for her service. You will go abroad to foreign lands that you bring back knowledge with which you may do service to her. Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. All is contained in that one single advice."

A few among the noblest revolutionaries have described the prison as their *tapovan*—the prayer ground where they first glimpsed the new light. To Sri Aurobindo—who meditated night and day—his heart's Lord Krishna[3] appeared and he was enjoined to leave his political activities to dedicate himself to the spiritual life, to invoke, that is, India's millennial wisdom and manifest it anew for the world.

Here I must pause a little to stress what I knew to be true; that God has appeared to many an illuminate to guide and call him to surrender his self-ill to His All-will. A friend of mine who plumed himself on his acumen once cross-questioned me. He quoted from Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam :

The Moving Finger writes: and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.

"This implies," he wailed, "that India has had her day and so had better get reconciled to the fate—the decline of our Dharma —prophesied by the Moving Finger. In other words, India's twilight hour bids fair to be engulfed by the implacable dogging Night that casts its grim shadows everywhere we look. And besides, why must we survive ?" he asked challengingly, "seeing that we don't deserve His Grace ?" This he flung at me as I had quoted to him from Swami Vivekananda's prophetic Colombo speech way back in 1897 :

"Formerly", Swamiji had declaimed, "I thought. . . that this is the Punya Bhumi. . . Today, I stand here and say, with conviction of truth, that it is so. . . Hence have started the founders of religions from the most ancient times, deluging the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth. Hence have proceeded the tidal waves of philosophy that have covered the earth, East or West, North or South, and hence again must start the wave which is going to spiritualize the material civilisation of the world. Here is the life-giving water with which must be quenched the burning fire of materialism which is burning the core of the hearts of millions in other lands. Believe me, my friends, this is going to be."

My friend, being an Indian, could not help but be moved by these noble words, but still he countered : "But how, my friend ? How is India's spiritual message going to be transmitted ? Through whose voices ? Where are the prophets, not to mention the Messiah ? How can we believe in Swamiji or Sri Aurobindo whom you quoted the other day from Savitri :

"The high gods look on man and watch and choose
Today's impossible for the future's base ?"

And we went on : "How can a realist look on such utterances

as anything other than wishful thinking? Christ, the idealist, said: "God is not mocked." But science, the realist says: 'Destiny is not mocked--let us not be star-gazers.' And isn't that destiny toppling us down from decadence finally into the abyss?"

I smiled and said: "Not so fast, my friend. India's soul has yet to be crumpled." What has changed is peripheral—the outer crust of so-called culture. But has not India assimilated miraculously—and over and over again—alien elements to achieve every time a new synthesis? Our sages and saints, prophets and Messiahs, were neither blind nor senile. Besides, how can you say that they were 'star-gazers' the authentic Illuminates who have not only rescued us repeatedly from sheer disasters by inspiring us to hark back to His Flute-call but also by weaning us from siren glamours that land us in the Abyss? Not for nothing did Sri Aurobindo sing in *Savitri*:

"How shall the end be vain when God is guide?"

My friend made a wry face: "But *is* God our guide today or the other Fellow? What about the deep unrest, violence and indiscipline we meet with at every turn? No, my dear friend, our bankrupt spirituality has *not* delivered the goods—that sticks out a mile."

"I know my friend," I cut in. "None but a blind man will say that we are riding the rainbow to the golden sunrise. 'Time *is* out of joint', as Shakespeare sighed. But the root cause is, assuredly, not the bankruptcy of our spirituality. It is our blind God-hostility that is leading us to the Pit. Sri Aurobindo has stressed it in *Savitri* over and over again:

"A dark concealed hostility is lodged
In the human depths, in the hidden heart of Time,
That claims the right to mar and change God's work.
Till it is slain peace is forbidden on earth."

My friend countered: "But are we God-hostile, we intellectuals? We want only to call a spade a spade."

"Yes, but don't you deny, in effect, the marvellous existence of diamonds? Listen. The omens are, indeed, bad—as Karna said to Krishna on the eve of the battle of Kurukshetra. But you must

look up a little if only to spot the silver lining. Just an instance in point : inspite of all our deplorable blunders we *have* given refuge to millions of refugees whom we might well have sout out by closing our borders. That is, surely, the first sign of the Lord's intervention. But there is also another hopeful sign : to wit, the widespred thirst for Light today all over the world—a dim perception (now incipient but it keeps growing) that a new horizon is opening out before our gaze, a new ideal of one World, World Government, World Tribunal, World Bank, World Army and so on. Never in human history have men and women acclaimed with one voice, as they have today, the banner of universal brotherhood and a new gospel of Truth and Love that brooks no barriers of caste and creed, race or colour. I concede, sadly, that we are at the moment denigrating the potency of the Song of Songs, of the Gita, that even an iota of dharma delivers us from great peril—"*svalpamapyasya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat*". But, my dear friend, the present unrest and topsy-turvy reversal of values just had to happen if only to open our eyes to the lunatic folly of indicting God as the author of crimes perpetrated by the Devil's disciples. And that is why in this fateful hour we must all the more be on our guard and not play into the hands of our Enemy number One—atheism—who cajoles us into throwing away the baby with the bath-water. In other words, we must never forget the great Upanishad's saying :

"Yada carmavadakasam vestaisvanti manavah
Tada devam avijnaya duhkhasvanto bhavisyanti."

"What does it mean ?"

"It means that the impatient clamour to eradicate at one sweep the evil lurking in life's roots, without first knowing the Divine, is essentially as futile as wanting to girdle the sky with leather. This has been the Eternal message of the Sanatana Dharma which Krishna appointed Sri Aurobindo to preach—the Sanatana Dharma of the Gita which is based, first and last, on man's aspiration to divinise his life with the power of prayer, meditation and dedication to the spiritual life."

"Sanatana Dharma ?" asked my friend, somewhat mystified. "You mean dogmatic r eligion ?"

"No ; I mean the Eternal findings of the soul which are

embodied in all revealed scriptures and hymned by poets and prophets and seers in all climes."

"How do you mean ?" he asked, still at sea.

"You haven't read Sri Aurobindo's *Uttarpara Speech*—the famous pronunciamento he uttered when he came out of the prison ?"

"N—no, though I have heard about it from gossips who told me that in prison Krishna materialised before Sri Aurobindo and gave in his hands the Gita, enjoining him to preach it to his countrymen."

"Not gossips, my friend," I laughed. "Nor had Krishna materialised like a ghost, out of octoplasm. It is called epiphany, that is. He manifested Himself to Sri Aurobindo in his prison-cell —even as He had to many a previous Messiah—to convey His divine message. Here let me read out from the book. Krishna came and said to Sri Aurobindo (the first message) :

> "I have given you a work and it is help to uplift this nation. Before long the time will come when you will have to go out of jail; for it is not my will that this time either you should be convicted or that you should pass the time as others have to do, in suffering for their country. I have called you to work, and that is the *Adesh* for which you have asked. I give you the *Adesh* to go forth and do my work. 'The second message came and it said : 'Something has been shown to you in this year of seclusion, something about which you had your doubts and it is the truth of the Hindu religion. It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the *rishis,* saints and *avatars,* and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to send forth My word. This is the *Sanatana Dharma,* this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. The agnostic and sceptic in you have been answered, for I have given you proofs within and without you, physical and subjective, which have satisfied you. When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the *Sanatana Dharma* that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world. When, therefore, it is said that

India shall rise, it is the *Sanatana Dharma* that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the *Sanatana Dharma* that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the *Sanatana Dharma* that shall expand and extend itself, over the world. It is for the *Dharma* and by the *Dharma* that India exists. To magnify the religion means to magnify the country. I have shown you that I am everywhere and in all men and in all things, that I am in this movement and I am not only working in those who are striving for the country but I am working also in those who oppose them and stand in their path. I am working in everybody and whatever men may think or do they can do nothing but help in my purpose. They also are doing my work; they are not my enemies but my instruments. In all your actions you are moving forward without knowing which way you move. You mean to do one thing and you do another. You aim at a result and your efforts subserve one that is different or contrary. It is *Shakti*, that has gone forth and entered into the people. Since long ago I have been preparing this uprising and now the time has come and it is I who will lead it to its fulfilment."

And so, Sri Aurobindo went on to add in explanation : "That which we call the Hindu religion is really the eternal religion, because it is the universal religion which embraces all others. If a religion is not universal, it cannot be eternal. A narrow religion, a sectarian religion, an exclusive religion can live only for a limited time and a limited purpose. This is the one religion that can triumph over materialism by including and anticipating the discoveries of science and the speculations of philosophy. It is the one religion which impresses on mankind the closeness of God to us and embraces in its compass all the possible means by which man can approach God. It is the one religion which insists every moment on the truth, which all religions acknowledge, that He is in all men and all things and that in Him we move and have our being. It is the one religion which enables us not only to understand and believe this truth but to realize it with every part of our being. It is the one religion which shows the world what the world is, that is the *Lila* of Vasudeva. It is the one religion which shows us how we can best play our part in that *Lila*, its subtlest laws and its noblest rules. It is the one religion which does not separate

life in any smallest detail from religion, which knows what immortality is and has utterly removed from us the reality of death.

"This is the word that has been put into my mouth to speak to you today. What I intended to speak, has been put away from me, and beyond what is given to me I have nothing to say. It is only the word that is put into me that I can speak to you. That word is now finished. I spoke once before with this force in me and I said then that this movement is not a political movement and that nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith. I say it again today, but I put it in another way. I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is the *Sanatana Dharma*, which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the *Sanatana Dharma*, with it it moves, and with it grows. When the *Sanatana Dharma* declines, then the nation declines and if the *Sanatana Dharma* were capable of perishing, with the *Santana Dharma* it would perish. The *Santana Dharma*, that is nationalism. This is the message that I have to speak to you."

I do not know whether or no the questioning intellect of my sceptical friend was finally appeased. But that is no concern of ours—by ours I mean of those who believe in the eternal Gospel of the soul which India has sponsored from time immemorial through her great saints, sages and apostles of the spirit. Such standard-bearers of the Lord must serve India today one-pointedly, holding up the banner of the One-in-all who is called by many names—say the Vedas (*ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti*). Sri Aurobindo belongs to this Pleiad of Illuminates and as such should be acclaimed by all who would co-operate with him—who love the India of the Upanishad, Gita and Tantra—the India whose sacred soil has been showered with the *Kathamrita*—nectarous words—of the darling sons : the minstrels of love divine leading us from age to age to the flowering fulfilment of the illumined soul.

To end on a note of warning sounded by Sri Aurobindo if only to stress that he was no "star-gazer" but a mighty sentinel in this distracted age.

In one of his most heart-warming messages he said that the hour was big with fate and so all who cherish India must hark back to her ever-ringing call of the spirit, otherwise we may "forfeit our Swadharma" which will be a disaster of the first

magnitude because :

> "The ancient India and her spirit might disappear altogether and we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be a real gain neither to the world nor to us. There is a question whether she may prosper more harmlessly in the outward life yet lose altogether her richly massed and firmly held spiritual experience and knowledge. It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving Light. This must not and surely will not happen : but it cannot be said that the danger is not there."[4]

To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

And so, we must brace ourselves to the supreme task of voicing not merely with our tongue but through our every act, thought and aspiration, the deathless call of the India of Krishna (The Bhagavat, 11.12.15).

> Mamekameva saranamatmanam sarvedehinam
> Yahi sarvatmabhavena maya sya hyakutobhayah

That is

> I am the soul of all, and so,
> Thou shalt for ever be free
> From cosmic fear if thou, O friend,
> but refuge seek in me

*Sanatana Dharma* means, literally, eternal religion. But since like (Shelley's) 'Love' it has been a "word too oft profaned" (exploited by fanatics and chauvinists and what not) I may here, in parenthesis, explain what Sri Aurobindo meant by it from his summit view of Yoga.

"The deepest heart, the inmost essence of religion", he writes, "apart from its outward machinery of creed, cult, ceremony, and symbol, is the search for God and the finding of God. Its aspiration is to discover the Infinite, the Absolute, the One, the Divine, who is all these things and yet no abstraction but a Being.

Its work is a sincere living out of the true and intimate relations between man and God, relations of unity, relations of difference, relations of an illuminated knowledge, an ecstatic love and delight, an absolute surrender and service, a casting of every part of our existence out of its normal status into an uprush of man towards the Divine and a descent of the Divine into man." (*The Human Cycle*, Chapter XIII).

## Notes and References

1. *Savitri*, 1, 3.
2. Sri Aurobindo always cherished Tilak as a great soul. In a tribute he wrote : "Neither Mr. Tilak nor his speeches really require any presentation or foreword. . . . He could not but stand in the end where he stands today, as one of the two or three leaders of the Indian people who are in their eyes the incarnation of the national endeavour and the God-given captains of the national aspiration. . . . Mr. Tilak's name stands already for history as a national-builder, one of the half-a-dozen greatest political personalities, memorable figures, representative men of the nation in this most critical period of India's destinies, a name to be remembered gratefully so long as the country has pride in its past and hope for its future."

   (*Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda*)
3. Krishna (sonnet)

   At last I find a meaning of soul's birth
   Into this universe terrible and sweet,
   I who have felt the hungry heart of earth,
   Aspiring beyond heaven to Krishna's feet.
   I have seen the beauty of immortal eyes,
   And heard the passion of the Lover's flute,
   And known a deathless ecstasy's surprise
   And sorrow in my heart for ever mute.
   Nearer and nearer now the music draws,
   Life shudders with a strange felicity;
   All Nature is a wide enamoured pause
   Hoping her lord to touch, to clasp, to be.
   For this one moment lived the ages past;
   The world now throbs fulfilled in me at last.

   (Sri Aurobindo's *Sonnets*, 35)
4. The message was sent to the Andhra University at the Convocation in December 1948.

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# THE JADAVPUR CONFERENCE ON SRI AUROBINDO

INDRA SEN

The Jadavpur University has grown up from the National College founded in the early days of the country's National strugle, whose principalship Sri Aurobindo had accepted in 1906. And our Nolinida was, in those days, much associated with it. The present Jadavpur University is a very big institution, but it remembers its beginning and Sri Aurobindo's original impetus. The University's philosophy department is also large and has brought out valuable publications. No wonder it thought of holding an International Philosophy Conference on Meaning and *Sri Aurobindo* in January 1983 from the 12th to the 19th.

Dr. Karan Singh, Member of Parliament, and Dr. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, a former Central Minister and now a professor of philosophy, both known for their love of Sri Aurobindo, were actively present at the Conference.

The organisation of the Conference clearly provided an incentive to many teachers of philosophy to read Sri Aurobindo. But the first reaction to *The Life Divine* in one steeped in contemporary Western metaphysics will easily be not a happy one. The language is different, the thought is different, the very approach is different. One severely identified with thinking and with the thinking consideration of things, at present, in fact with meanings and language analysis, will find it really hard to take an approach where life as such seeks enlightenment and fulfilment including, of

course, the best intellectual satisfaction too. The very first chapter of *The Life Divine* is called "The Human Aspiration" and the goals are set forth as "God, Light, Freedom, Immortality." To get into an aspiring form and look forward to one or the other of these great goals of all humanity is an extremely difficult readjustment for one settled in the various processes of logical thinking.

The standpoint of aspiration is essentially one of will and seeking and growth and of increasing joy in the competence of life and existence. Logical thinking and its pursuit too has a joy. But it is a limited one, of the thinking activity, not of increasing confidence in living and the progress of living. All this implies the standpoint of experience and the progressive enrichment of experience, not just of thinking and of a coherent view of things or meanings and words.

Many of us who had previously a training in Modern Metaphysics and have turned to Sri Aurobindo and dived into the pages of *The Life Divine* have found satisfying solutions of their philosophical problems, problems of good and evil, of freedom and bondage, of progress and destiny, of existence, of world, of God and so on. Of course, each in his own way.

Sri Aurobindo is certainly not a conventional modern metaphysician, but he has wonderful solutions of our philosophical problems. The problem of the One and the Many or of the relation of God and the world is one which has vexed thinkers in the East and the West and this finds a challenging solution here. And this takes place through his concept of Supermind. This solution makes many other solutions possible. But Sri Aurobindo has to be taken at his terms. He lays down an approach, demands a standpoint of experience, thinking must be wide and large, ready to accommodate diversities (not he insistently eliminative) and then one can hope for a real clarity regarding what Life is, what Existence is.

The papers presented at the Conference on Sri Aurobindo are all interesting, each in its own way, and it would be educative to review them briefly here as a general acquaintance with this International Conference.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad's paper is called "Some Reflections on Sri Aurobindo's views about the knowledge of the Ultimate Value." Through his varied reflections, Dr. Rajendra Prasad seems to be seeking the spiritual or mystic truth, but in the course of this attempt his philosophical personality asking for reasons and

grounds and dialectical skill and reasoned principles and of opposition to religion, and to yoga and 'becoming something' come up and create much agitation in his mind. This agitation, truly speaking, evokes sympathy and a feeling that this seeking, if given its chance, will create its own clarity and certitude. The last sentence of the paper, in fact, is touching. Says he, "But to say all this is to make a confession, and not to intend anything derogatory to Sri Aurobindo."

However, a few things may be said by way of clearing up certain impressions. One, Sri Aurobindo is not a traditionalist, the very grain of his nature is independent. At one stage of life he came across an action of spiritual power and that fired his quest for the spiritual. He received a little external help in this quest, otherwise he followed it all by himself. He most significant discovery of the 'supermind' too was his own, of which he found a confirmation in the Veda later on. There is a lot in Sri Aurobindo which rejects tradition. He rejects the Karma theory and his evolutionary view modifies Hindu tradition as a whole. In one context, he says, we cannot limit our knowledge by the points of the Gita. In another, says he, our great past should be followed by a greater future. The traditionalist attitude is backward looking, which he always discouraged.

Religion is also not the thing which occupies a place of ultimate distinction and honour in his scheme of things. In the past in India it went hand in hand with philosophy. That is true. But Sri Aurobindo's key idea is the spirit and its progress in the individual, in society, and in the race. The spirit is the reality. It is also the self-existent fact and the intrinsic value. The evidence is the human experience taken in its widest compass of history and a qualitative appreciation of its varieties, the dependent character of the empirical facts and the verifiability provided by yogic practice. In the language of modern metaphysics itself there are also philosophers enough who talk of the 'spirit'. Philosophy to be creative and powerful must possess and transmit something of the power of the Absolute Spirit. It need not then feel itself weak and depend upon religion or science or economics to vitalise it.

Further, Mysticism is hardly an appropriate world for Sri Aurobindo. He is at pains to make the spirit intelligible to reason. He has offered a harmonisation of the varied spiritual experiences and realisations and created a better appreciation of

them. The spirit is not in him something misty and vague to deserve the name of mysticism. Reason is also not a thing forbidden as it often has been with the mystics. Sri Aurobindo accords a place of honour in his way and view of life to reason. But just as the senses have a limitation to their capacities so has reason limitations of its own—that of being able to construct a view of ultimate reality, but being not capable of a direct awareness of it. There is so much in praise of reason in *The Life Divine*.

The term 'knowing' indeed needs reconsideration. Its various senses need to be clearly recognised and demarcated. Kant had said, the things-in-themselves cannot be known, but can surely be thought of. 'Knowing' was here limited to what can be covered by the categories of understanding. And Kant's sense of knowing has set up a tradition. But he did feel the need of another 'knowing', which he called 'thinking.'

Now all awarenesses are not alike. Among all the varied experiences of life the experience of "I am" or self-existence is the most certain. It possesses certitude which no other experience does. Will this 'knowing' be not qualitatively different ? This involves really what Sri Aurobindo has formulated as "knowledge by Identity." If we are to know Reality and 'know' means with certitude, then we must seek and achieve identity with Reality. Then alone we will really know it. This amounts to saying that we must become that. Of course, in the absence of such knowledge, we can have an ideational awareness of Reality. But that would not carry certitude. It will, however, carry the force of its logical coherence.

The greatest strength and contribution of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy perhaps lies in the links it provides between Mind and the Absolute Existence. Shankar had to take recourse to the term 'inexplicable' (*anirvacanīya*) in his attempt to find a relation between Mind and the Absolute. The world became Maya, inexplicable. But with the link of the Supermind, the dynamic creative principle, the world gets a different perspective. What is more it becomes transformable. Between the Mind and Supermind come a number of levels of experience or planes of being. These constitute a most valuable data of experience which is the best contribution of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. If our philosophising remains limited to sense-data, moral and aesthetic experience and rational activity, we can certainly build up a view of Reality. But if we have also the spiritual experience of these planes above mind

it surely means a great deal more. We might at least be open to the possibility of this field of experience. The past spiritual effort of humanity does bear evidence to the reality of this field in varied forms and degrees.

Sri Aurobindo's writing is large and most varied. But for the strict philosophical purpose the book of systematic exposition is only *The Life Divine.* His *Letters in Yoga* are answers to queries put by his disciples in the course of their practice of yoga. We have, therefore, to be careful in using his words in a philosophical context.

This is perhaps excessive in connection with Dr. Rajendra Prasad's paper, which, in fact, consists of reflections and is a confession of his present feeling regarding Sri Aurobindo and the philosophical field of *The Life Divine.*

Professor Matilal's paper is an elaborate study of Scepticism, Mysticism and Sri Aurobindo's Optimism. The general commitment of philosophy at the present time is with the instrumentation of Knowledge rather than with Reality as such, Truth as such. That gives the perspective to read, understand and evaluate Sri Aurobindo. This approach makes Sri Aurobindo a mystic, his empirical world and its knowledge an illusion and his optimism unconvincing.

In order to understand another thinker and to get the best of him, should we not in the beginning look at things as he does? Having once appreciated him, we can then more easily and more effectively discover the limitations of his Weltanschauung.

Sri Aurobindo's first urge and demand is "Truth at any cost." We must desperately feel the inadequacy of ordinary life, insistently ask for 'the truth' or 'the plentitude of being.' Professor Matilal, even with the limitation imposed on him by his basic stand in philosophy, goes far indeed in appreciating Sri Aurobindo. But, actually there is no scepticism in Sri Aurobindo, partial knowledge there is, but it must be seen against the background of his Integral Knowledge. There is no mysticism too in Sri Aurobindo. He offers a coherent intelligible account of the spiritual Reality and its different orders as best possible. His optimism too is a logical consequence of his theory of evolution. If the process of evolution and the progression involved in it can be appreciated, then the optimism of his thought will have to be admitted even though one may not be able to sympathise with it under the

depression caused by the menacing situation of a nuclear holocaust.

Dr. Nayak's paper on 'Supermental Knowledge' is an extremely interesting paper. He persistently inquires what supermind may be; seems even willing to accept it on the rare luck of a unique spiritual experience, but his logical tools are unhelpful and he feels bound by them. The issue is then left as unverifiable as also unfalsifiable.

Is there no way out ? The situation is really not hopeless. Sri Aurobindo says the logical tools are useful for what they are meant. Prof. Nayak also says, "Our language and conceptual tools are suited to our practical needs; they serve us well in our day to day transactions in the world. As a matter of fact, they are only meant to do this job, but they inevitably fail us when they are applied to a field for which they are not originally meant." For a wider and a higher field of knowledge one really needs to grow in consciousness in depth, in width and in height and thereby contact and know the same. By being superficially poised in consciousness we are aware of an immense diversity that constitutes our normal world. Through a vertical growth in consciousness we can come to a level of experience where unity becomes a spontaneous perception. That is the fact of supermental knowledge, as the writer has learned to appreciate. This experience of unity added to our experience of diversity gives the needed complementary factor. At the ordinary level, unity is persistently sought, but it can only be imagined and conceived. To experience it as a fact is a real fulfilment.

Appreciation of growth in depth, in width and in height needs a little elaboration. Normal human consciousness is much circumscribed. It is aware of limited situation of life given 'here' and 'now' and that too in respect of the sensible qualities. We have to extend ourselves laterally in order to become aware of a wider field of other persons and things. Similarly, we have to withdraw from sensory involvements and attempt a deeper poise of inner concentration and thought. Again we can contemplate things by trying to rise above them. Seeing things from deep within and from above facilitates their apprehension as a unity and a whole.

Professor Troy Organ's paper "Sri Aurobindo's Theory of Intuition" is a most scholarly paper which collects perhaps all the usages of 'Intuition' found in Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine*, *Letters*,

*Human Cycle*, etc. The Professor also gives parallel ideas from Plato, Spinoza, Bergson and others. All-told the paper is a comprehensive study of the subject.

The citations from Sri Aurobindo surprise even a professional student of Sri Aurobindo and one easily gets confused by the great variety of usages of the term.

But what one misses in the learned paper and what one began to expect while reading the paper is a constructive conclusion, an essential statement of Sri Aurobindo's Theory of Intuition. The great variety of usages of the term and the contradictions that they suggest or imply do rest upon an essential basic concept. What is that ? That is what is needed. And then further why does that acquire different nuances in different contexts ? Professor Organ's great labour raises that question. What is the answer ? Piecemeal or fragmentary direct awareness, without the ordinary steps of ratiocinative thinking is perhaps the basic sense of the term. But it obtains at all planes of being and that gives to it its variety. Intuition is a ray of light shooting to its object. This ray becomes massive at overmind and integral at Supermind. As it goes lower down it becomes diffused and diluted. And intuition is essentially a power of identification with the object of knowledge. A plane of being itself is called 'intuition' possibly for the reason that intuition is the characteristic action of that plane. In this connection, it may be helpful to consider that Reality is ultimately an essential unity and that the planes are not demarcated spheres, but only recognisable levels. Sri Aurobindo recognises seven planes of being, but some Vedic rishis recognised in the same field eleven too. The rainbow, a familiar natural phenomena, presents seven colours, but the different colours run into adjoining colours and give rise to intermediate shades. That complicates the situation.

Professor Organ's authentic citations from Sri Aurobindo pose a problem and the above elucidation is the best the writer can offer as a possible coherent understanding of the matter. The Professor is demanding continually a conceptual clarity and consistency and he is right in doing so. But Sri Aurobindo is faithful to Reality in all its plethora of variation and seeks to give full expression to what he seeks and knows. A conceptual consistency is not his primary concern. The best possible expression to Reality is his guiding motive. This is what the writer has learned to appreciate. Prof. Organ's perplexity is entirely understandable,

But it may be worthwhile identifying oneself with Sri Aurobindo's stand, aiming at Reality and the joy of knowing it and its innumerable facts.

Dr. Mrs. Aster Patel's paper is called "Sri Aurobindo : The perspective of Integral Knowledge." It gives a full broad view of Sri Aurobindo's epistemological position and it helps much in seeing the specific issues of knowledge raised otherwise in their larger context. Particularly useful is the characterisation of the approach needed to understand and evaluate Sri Aurobindo.

The Conference on Sri Aurobindo lasted three days and these and a couple of other late received papers evoked discussions, much appreciated by the participants. As the last impression of the papers and the discussions, a line to pursue in the future, appears to be that in Sri Aurobindo we have a wide scheme of epistemology. It distinguishes different ways of knowing in which intellectual or rational knowing has its due place. But an intuitive and identificative is the one apt for the knowledge of ultimate reality. And philosophy must know Reality, not too easily conclude that such knowledge is not possible or only speculate about Reality. If it does so, then it will possess the force of Reality and will be a living inspiration for life as a whole.

The brochure of the Conference under "The Themes of the Conference" presents a fine note on Sri Aurobindo. It says :

> "A close study of Sri Aurobindo's theory of knowledge makes one conscious of some important points : (1) fine and graded distinction drawn between different ways of knowing, common sense, scientific or separative, reflective, and super-reflective or identificative; (2) fine and graded distinction drawn between different levels of linguistic symbolism and acts appropriate to different ways of knowing; (3) a sustained and critical argument to show : (a) the practical necessity and (b) transcendental inadequacy of scientific knowledge; (4) justification of an evolutionary theory of knowledge in which error is recognised as a necessary and yet corrigible condition and truth as ineffable identity between the knower and the known; (5) rejection of conventionalism; (6) a shifting line of demarcation between knowledge and ignorance; and (7) vindication of a subjectivist or phenomenological view of truth."

Indeed Sri Aurobindo's theory of knowledge is wide comprehensive and needs to be worked out and elaborately stated. So is his theory of language, which involves new capacities of expression adapted to the qualities of the objects of knowledge. He has elaborately shown how the Vedas evolved a language of their own and the Upanishadas an expression suited to their purpose. His own language of *The Life Divine*, which is felt rather irksome by some readers, has a quality of wide synthetic perception to express, in an unbroken way, a complex spiritual reality. This is not the language of his *letters* or *Essays on the Gita* or other books.

Sri Aurobindo's theory of knowledge and language are indeed a most inviting field for research, which could throw a useful light on the issues of the philosophy of meaning.

This is possibly already in the mind of the Philosophy Department of the Jadavpur University or some other scholars.

A study of the papers and the brochure is really rewarding and we look forward to the publication of the proceedings with keen interest.

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## SRI AUROBINDO AS THE CULMINATION OF INDIA'S SPIRITUAL TRADITION*

M.P. PANDIT

The subject for our discussion is "Sri Aurobindo as the Culmination of India's Spiritual Tradition." We really do not know where the Indian tradition starts from. There is certainly a tradition of prehistory but of that I would not speak because it is a controversial subject. I prefer to commence from the age of the Vedic mystics as the beginnings of our Indian heritage.

In the Vedic age, as is common among the ancient peoples all over the world, it was a symbolic mentality, an intuitive perception that dominated the lives of men. In that early age men were conscious of something more than physical figures in the world in which they lived. Behind the natural phenomena of rain, of wind, the existence of trees and rivers and mountains, they sensed other presences; they felt a mysterious awareness of certain powers which almost seemed to speak to them; they made an impact on their consciousness and these they called the gods. They realised that these presences, the gods, had a control over their lives, that they were at the mercy of these powers. If they could establish some connection, some link with them, they could hope to have a more secure, purposeful life. So they went on to establish ways and means of calling these gods, propitiating them, invoking these presences and what we call religion grew up. But

*Address at the University of Bombay, September 12, 1977.

this religion was not a religion of mechanical rituals; the gods, the presences, were to them living powers to commune with.

The speak of Agni, the God of fire, of Vayu, the God of wind. Certainly they were hot naive enough, as is imagined by many scholars, that material fire is Agni or the storm that blows is Vayu. They have made it cleár in their hymns that Angi is the God who presides over the principle of fire. Vayu is the God who controls the elementary operations of wind, and so on. When they speak of the sun they make it clear that this sun, the physical sun in our physical sky, is only a symbol of a sun of truth who stands always unveiled at the meridian of the sky, like the eye of Vishnu, but perceivable by the eye of the wise. Only the eye of the seer can see the sun. Certainly they could not have meant the physical sun which can be seen even by the foolish; the physical sun does not shine all the twenty-four hours. There is a night that intervenes. To them these were supernatural powers but not beyond their reach.

They institutionalised the system of sacrific, what they called *yajna*, by which they offered the best that they had, the cream of their life experience, the best of their thoughts and emotions to the Gods praying to them to accept their offering. They are described to have offered distilled juices like *soma*. Soma is indeed not the plant in search of which scholars have gone into the forests of the Andes or of the Himalayas. It means, as the hymns, themselves make it clear, the sap of one's life-experience. One hymn, particularly, is very clear. It says : these Brahmanas press a plant, drink its juice and think that they have drunk the soma. They are fools. It is the cream of one's life-experience that is made over to the God, Agni, the sacred Fire who is seen by our physical eye as the material fire but who is really the inner flame of aspiration lit in the heart of each. Soaring his way towards the heavens of God, he is described as the tongue of the Gods. He carries the offering and reaches it to them. It is through his mouth that the Gods get their food and the Gods take birth in man. Now the birth of a God in man is not a physical birth but it is an establishment, a manifestation of the particular psychological power, a spiritual faculty for which the God stands. There is Indra, the God of the divine mind. When Indra takes birth in man, it means man has exceeded his sense or thought mind and is open to the illuminations of Truth.

Then there is a sequence in which the Gods take birth in man. First, Agni is born. Agni is described as the immortal guest in house and house. He is there as the immortal guest in mortal beings. He calls, that is the flame of aspiration in man invokes the higher Powers. And the first Power to be so invoked is Indra. Indra is the lord of the divine mind. He brings illumination, fills the mind with light. Thereafter comes Varuna, lord of the ocean. Varuna is the God of Vastness, the ocean representing infinity. He is guardian of the cosmic law. Infinite that he is, he extends the consciousness of man—as wide as possible--helps him to break the ego walls of his consciousness. And after Varuna has done his work, it is Mitra who is called, the God of Love. The implication is clear : if before man has purified himself through Agni, before he has extended his consciousness beyond his ego barriers, the divine Love were to dawn, take birth in man, it would be misused. And the process continues.

All the symbols, all the materials that are used in sacrifice are described with deliberate symbolism. The Rishis pray to the Gods for the cow, they pray for the horse. Now one doesn't need to pray to the Gods, after performing the sacrifice, for cows. In Sanskrit, particularly the Vedic Sanskrit, *go* which stands for a cow also means by *double entendre, slesa,* a ray, a ray of light. So when the Rishi prays for a herd of cows he means rays of light. When he prays for horse—horse represents power, life-energy—he prays for power. Cows and horses are most prayed for because they are the light of knowledge and the power of effectuation. The earth on which man lives is described as the mother, the heaven as the father. There is a continuous interchange between the earth and the heaven.

They speak of an order of worlds, seven in number. This is a cosmos, not a chaos. There is first the earth-principle, *prthivi,* then there is middle-world, *antariksa;* and then there is the *dyauh,* the heaven of mind; then there is the *brhat dyauh,* the vast heaven which is the world of light, the world of true consciousness. Above that are what they describe as three earths or three heavens which correspond to the later Vedantic classification of Sat, Chit, Ananda, or to the Puranic hierarchy of Jana, Tapas and Satya. They have a seven-fold order of worlds; and man is an epitome of all. They speak to God as their companion, they look upon the whole human society as one family, they look for achievement

here on earth. Significantly, between the lower triple world of which man is a part and the higher triple world, the region of the Gods, they speak of a *certain fourth*. They don't describe it but they say a certain fourth placing, a fourth portion which is the *brhat dyauh*, the great waters, the great heavens, *maho arnah.*

This, in brief, is the first age where India's spiritual genius came to be forged. We do not know how long this Vedic age continued. Certain it is that the hymns that have come down to us do not represent the Vedic age at its zenith. They rather represent the final epoch of an age which was passing and which was recovered in certain segments of knowledge constituted as the *samhita.* This glorious age—the age when there was an intimacy between man and God, when there was no real distinction between the kingdom of the Gods and the kingdom of men, when man was nursed on the bosom of Mother Nature—passed and we do not know how long it took for a movement of recovery to take place. Possibly a thousand years may have elapsed between the ebbing of the Vedic age and the beginning of a movement for recovery.

The movement for reclamation took three forms. One stream of this movement took the form of effort for the reclamation of the ritual aspect of the Vedic sacrifice. There were certain rituals, ceremonies—all those were getting lost; so great scholars, great priests came out and recovered those rituals and systematised them, gave meaning, explained the symbols, built legends to explain the background and that is known as the line of Brahmana, the *Purvam Mimamsa.*

The second stream concerned itself with the recovery of the knowledge-content of the Vedas and that is known as the tradition of the Upanishads. Now the Upanishads are not, as many eminent scholars, even Indian philosophers, seem to think : that the Upanishads are revolts against the Vedic tradition. Far from it. The Upanishads are a restatement of the Vedic knowledge in a language more suited to the mentality of a later age. The Upanishads are very very clear on this point. They always clinch an argument, whenever they present a thesis, by citing a Vedic passage. Their crowning sentence is : So has the Rishi said, so has that hymn said, *tad rca abhyuktam.* Thus, it is the Veda, the word of revelation that is the highest appeal.

But human mind had reached another stage of development,

the reasoning faculty, the faculty of analysis slowly replacing the intuitive mentality. They took up the truth perceived by the Vedic Rishis and sought to approach them from another angle. Not just to receive them because the earlier Rishis had said so, but to test for themselves in their personal experience how far these were valid. They practised spiritual austerities and exercised their minds to see how far those truths were valid. These are the Rishis of the Upanishads. They don't have one approach but a number of approaches to the truth. Each one recognises the truth of one statement and announces it but that does not prevent him from appreciating, from even enunciating on the next occasion the truth of another approach. This catholicity of approach, comprehensiveness of mind has led many short-sighted minds to speak of the contrariety of opinions, the variety of "guesses" in the Upanishads. They are neither guesses nor opinions. When one Rishi meets another at a debate he does not ask, "What does thou think ?" He says, "What dost thy experience say ?" The debates—they are miscalled debates—are declarations of each one's own testament of faith, statement of realisation. Each Rishi takes a few disciples and teaches them the truth of his life, what he has achieved during his whole career. In those days there were no writing materials, there were no pens, ball-point or felt. Indian memory is phenomenal. So a few disciples would sit and the teacher would speak. The students would retain it in their memories and commit by heart certain key passages. Between one topic and another the Rishi is known to have halted to give time to the younger minds to assimilate what was communicated to them before passing on to the next. These pauses have led some modern people to interpret these as inexplicable gaps in the thinking of the Rishis. They are not gaps, as Sri Aurobindo points out, but deliberate pauses to give scope to the human mind, to grasp and be ready. The fact that these are deliberate pauses is indicated by the deliberate use of a key expression which is also in the earlier passage. The highest authority continues to be the Veda.

Whatever were implicit truths in the Veda are made explicit in Upanishads. They spoke in the Veda of a number of worlds. The Taittiriya Upanishad, for instance, speaks of the five bodies of man. It says in a memorable passage that behind the physical body of man, behind the green stuff of the universe that is

*annamaya*, there is a subtler self, that is the *pranamaya*; behind the *pranamaya*; there is the *manomaya*, mental; behind the *manomaya*, there is *jnanamaya*, the knowledge-self; behind the knowledge-self there is the *anandamaya*.

The Upanishad speaks of five coats expressively called *kosa*, sheath. The soul can get rid of those sheaths, it is not something bound. Look at the deliberate manner in which the word *kosa* is used, it is a coat. There are five successive coats, each one corresponds to one plane of existence. This is the way in which the Upanishads explicate what is implicit in the Veda. This was the second movement, the Upanishads reclaiming the knowledge-content of the Veda.

The third stream was towards the recovery of the esoteric practices, the practical disciplines that were followed in the Vedic age. This movement is cherished, continued as yoga and the Tantras. We do not know how ancient yoga is. It is not that yoga started with Patanjali. Patanjali has only systematised a floating tradition of yogic practices. There are enough hints of yoga in the Vedic hymns. The Shvetashvatara Upanishad speaks specifically of yoga. But the yogic tradition as such may be said to have formulated itself with the Sankhyans and the yoga of Patanjali.

The Sankhyan was the first tradition to speak of duality, nature and soul, *purusa* and *prakrti*. Till then it was all one truth; even when they spoke of power, *sakti*, they said *devatama-sakti*, the self-power, the self *as* power. But here comes Sankhyan yoga which speaks of an eternal duality and even without mention of God. The Sankhyans do not admit in their pristine tradition the presence of God. There is a small school which speaks of God but they are designated as a minor school. Even Patanjali makes a hesitant mention of God when he speaks of *isvara pranidhana* in the Niyama section of his preliminaries. Both, however, the yoga of Patanjali and the Sankhyan and the various schools based upon them, attempt to preserve the discipline of self-purification, self-detachment, release from nature and realise a state reflecting the pure Self—either abandoning nature of staying in nature but reflecting the tranquility of the Self.

Naturally with the rise of schools, with the rise of dualism, with these different approaches, there was quite a variety of approaches, schools of philosophy, schools of yoga. And as is

normal with the Indian history, there was an attempt to synthesise.

Sri Aurobindo points out how the Bhagavad Gita came to synthesise, to sift, to reject the accretions of superstition and wrong understanding and preserve in a reconciled and synthesised form, the essential truths of the Indian heritage. The Gita, for instance, takes note of the bad odour into which the institution of sacrifice has fallen. It condemns the *vedavadaratah*, those who speak of the sole-sufficing doctrine of the outer sacrifice. It emphasises that the principle of sacrifice is really a psychological one; it means an interchange between men and God. Sacrifice was issued into the creation by the supreme creator when he created the Gods and the men and said, "Prosper ye, on mutual sacrifice." The Gita restores the original significance of sacrifice and asks man to look upon sacrifice as a psychological function, interchange, between himself and the world, interchange between himself and God. Similarly, it takes note of the different pleas for priority between what is called *ksara* and the *aksara*, the mutable and the immutable, the personal and the impersonal. Scholars quarrelled, large debates used to be held to decide which of these is greater. Some would say the personal God is important, others would say that the personal God is only a projection of the impersonal reality—the impersonal alone is true. The personalists would say no, the impersonal is only a substance from which the personal comes forth. And so the debates continued. The Gita comes to this question and says : Both are true. The *ksara* and the *aksara* are both eternal truths but they are both aspects of the *purusottama*, the Supreme God—of him, the *aksara*, is the first poise in manifestation and based upon it is the *ksara*. Similarly, the Gita takes note of the diverse approaches of the yoga of bhakti, the yoga of knowledge, the yoga of karma and says these are not three different sects but lines of one Truth and each one finds its fulfilment in the others. It speaks of how man can synthesise and integrate all the three lines through a movement of surrender, *saranam vraja*. It lays the foundation for a new school of thought all together—the yoga of love—not just of devotion but one of utter love and surrender. The Gita stands as a great water mark for the spirit of synthesis, reconciliation that is repeatedly brought to bear on the Indian life-situation.

Long after the Gita, there was an unhappy interregnum. In

an age repelled by the excesses of ritualism, casteism, there was the rise of the Buddha decrying the Vedic tradition, questioning the existence of a personal God, emphasising the *nirakara*, the *nirguna* reality. Well, it gave a certain twist to the Indian tradition. Spirituality fled from life to the forests, the *viharas*. Asceticism raised its head. Till then asceticism on such a large scale was not there in India. It had its inevitable reaction and ultimately life asserted itself and there was a revival beginning with the great Acharya. He had to adopt the language of the Buddha but he gave it a new turn. He said yes, the world as it is, as we experience it, is not true. The reality is Brahman alone. So he started by positing the reality of Brahman, the reality of God which the Buddha had denied. He started with that and he said this world may be an appearance but its basic substance is Brahman and the individual man also is told that he is none other than Brahman. Shankara arrested the spread of the Buddhist movement. He went round in that age without transport, from the north to the south, from the east to the west and established, like sentinels, his four glorious centres of spiritual renaissance and laid the foundations for a pure Vedic way of life. He was followed by another renovating tradition represented by Ramanuja, though Ramanuja himself was not the founder. He said, not only is God real but man and nature also are real, though in a dependent way. Note they went on adding more and more of an existence in the realm of reality. After Buddha had disturbed the balance established by the old Aryan mind, Shankara came to posit God. Ramanuja's school added man and nature also. They are not of the same order of reality as God, but derived from God Brahman; all the same, because they are derived from Brahman that is real, they are also real. Then came Maddhva, the founder of the dualist school and he said man is as real as God. Maybe man cannot have the same status as God but he is not a dependent real. Man is real, God is real. Man cannot, may not be able to unite with God but he can live with God, he can serve God. So man was restored to his position.

That was the third service rendered by the schools of Vedanta. It is easy enough for us now to look with a lofty eye at Vedanta and speak of its obscurantism but the service that it has done towards the reclamation of the Indian spirit is unchallengeable.

After the Vedantic movement followed that great turn into the wider movement of the Tantras. The Tantras are not merely a movement different from or subsequent to the Vedas. Their origins lie as far back as the Vedas, that is why they are also known as the Agamas. Both the Tantras and the Veda have a common origin but that is another subject into which we won't enter here. The Vedantists emphasised the Brahman, or the Self as a part of Brahman. The Tantra came to take up the other side; it said Nature, *sakti*, also is important. After all, the Self effectuates itself through Nature. God manifests through his nature, so *sakti* is important. There is a cosmic *sakti*, *mahasakti*, which manifests the world. That same *sakti* is present within each individual body as the *kundalini*. There are centres in each individual where this *sakti* is concentrated. If by discipline, by yoga, you can awaken this latent *sakti* in you, these various windows of consciousness, centres of energy open and you come into a luminous zone of consciousness. As the whole of man, from the lowest to be highest part, gets integrated in the movement of the latent *sakti* all his possibilities reveal themselves, hidden faculties come into operation and there is a union between Nature and God in each person. When there is this union there is release, there is *mukti*. Once you have got *mukti* you have not to reject nature but you are to participate in the movements of nature. This *mukti* is supplemented, followed by *bhukti*, a cosmic enjoyment, participation in God's enjoyment of his creation. That is the aim of the Tantras. Sri Aurobindo points out how both the Vedanta and the Tantra together comprehend the entire scheme in restoring their real value in terms of the divine reality.

Our Indian past has had an unusually long past, I doubt whether, except in the case of China, there is any parallel in history to this nation which has had such long uninterrupted innings of life. It is inevitable that after thousands of years of this rising life-curve, there had to be an ebb and there was a period of the exhaustion of life-force which coincided with foreign invasion, impact of alien cultures, extraneous influences and the Indian spirit went down and got submerged for a time. But the Indian spirit is not a product of mental culturing. It is a divine spirit, it comes direct from the soul, the soul of the nation. It had its renaissance which was symbolised by the appearance of

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa in the last century, who demonstrated the unity of religions, the living truth of all the Indian traditions in his own personal life. He did not argue—he just demonstrated; whether it is the Vedantic realisation, the truth of the Tantra, whether it is the Christian or the Muslim faith, he showed in his personal life how they all lead to one truth, are based upon one truth and he established for the first time in the history of the world the truth of the unity of all religions. He was more than followed by his distinguished disciple, Vivekananda, who entered into the spirit of the time, enlarged upon the Ramakrishna legacy, added a social content to the teaching. He emphasised the social concern of spirituality. He said personal salvation had no meaning if those around were still steeped in poverty—material and spiritual. He brought a militant note to spiritual approach and whatever the controversy that arose—many of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna objected to what they called the heresy of Vivekananda in importing Western concepts into an Indian approach—Vivekananda has well served the Indian Spirit in emphasising and adding a social dimension to the spiritual tradition.

When Vivekananda was at his height, Sri Aurobindo was just returning from England after fourteen years of stay and he was deeply influenced, as he records so greatfully, by the example of Ramakrishna, by the philosophy and the work of Vivekananda. He was not only influenced but went on to write in a column for the *Bande Mataram* that it would take five hundred years for India to understand and assimilate the teaching of this colossal spiritual genius of Dakshineshwar. He record how even after Vivekananda passed away, when he (Sri Aurobindo) was in the Alipore jail, Vivekananda appeared to him in vision for nearly eleven or twelve days and guided him, acquainting him with the real above the higher mind upto the supermind—those areas of cosmic existence which Sri Aurobindo had to navigate, exploit and make part of his Vision. He also gave certain hints regarding the sadhana to be pursued, for making those realms part of the human consciousness. That was after Vivekananda's withdrawal from physical existence.

I do not need to go into the story of Sri Aurobindo's political life or his changing the field of his activity from the political to the spiritual under a divine imperative, his tapasya for four years,

1910 to 1914, in Pondicherry and his starting of the *Arya* in collaboration with the Mother, his radiant collaborator, in which he expounded his philosophy of the Life Divine—the philosophy of the perfection of life, perfect man in a perfect society. In his philosophy Sri Aurobindo has shown a global comprehension which leaves out nothing, not only from the Indian tradition but from any worthwhile world-tradition. He speaks of integral philosophy and in the practice that he built to translate that philosophy into practice of the yoga of self-perfection. He bases his whole approach on the truth that the whole world, the universe is a manifestation of God. It is not an imposition on the pure reality of Brahman by any other Power nor is it a subsidiary derivation of God but a direct manifestation of the Supreme Reality. He recalls to us the famous hymn of the *Purusha Sukta* in which the thousand-headed cosmic person is described, how he sacrificed his body and from his self-sacrifice rose this entire creation and humanity. That is the seed of the whole theory of involution, when we say that the divine reality has involved itself making it possible for all this variegated universe to evolve. At the base is this supreme holocaust of the *purusa* described so gloriously in the Veda.

In keeping with the old Vedic vision of a certain community of interest between earth and heaven, Sri Aurobindo refuses to admit any gulf between *there* and *here*. He admits it is easy to achieve success on earth but to establish heaven on earth is the challenge before man. Heaven we have possessed. Many of us, many sages, many saints, have possessed heaven in their highest consciousness but it is the reclamation of earth that we are called upon to do. That is what he wrote in a letter to the Mother when she was in France.

In *Savitri*, which we will be dealing with tomorrow, Sri Aurobindo says : Easy the heavens were to build for God; earth was his difficult matter. He continues the Vedic tradition of recognising God, man, nature as constituting one Reality. He continues the Vedic vision, he sights the Upanishadic dicta. Each *mahavakya* of the Upanishad is taken up as a pillar of his philosophy. He points out how the *mahavakya* of *tat tvam asi*, Thou art That—a saying which has been the base for a whole philosophy denying reality to this objective world, emphasising the subjective reality of your own self which is one with God—has not been read

sufficiently in conjunction with the other *mahavakya, sarvam khalvidam brahma*, All is Brahman. If thou art Brahman, it is also true that all is Brahman. We have to take a comprehensive view in which Brahman is equated not only with your being, but with all the rest. The Mundaka Upanishad describes how as from a central fire issue, innumerable sparks. Thus, the creation comes to be from the central Being. A million sparks come forth; they are the starters in the race to God. He refuses to accept that a thing, a form which is created out of a reality can be anything but real. He draws upon the Vedic and the Upanishadic traditions and he emphasises the supremacy of spiritual experience. He holds that philosophy, philosophy in the Western sense, has no relevance to human seeking for God—it is a mental weaving, a problem of thought, speculative exercise. Philosophy, in the Indian tradition, is a statement in terms of the mind, in terms of the intellect, of what you experience spiritually. If you feel oneness with all, if you feel a certain unity with the creation and then express that experience, explain, justify it in terms of the mind, that is philosophy. Philosophy is only a handmaid of spiritual experience, Spiritual experience is prior, philosophy is later.

He continues this tradition of the Veda. He also accepts the Gita as a parameter for many of these solutions of the dialectical problems, like the *purusa* and the *prakrti*. He describes how the Gita has given clue to their reconciliation in the concept of *paraprakrti*. What is *paraprakrti*? The supreme Nature, the Power of God. When it is in the field of Ignorance it becomes *prakrti*, but it is really one in essence. Sri Aurobindo also takes the ancient imagery of the two birds, the oversoul and the human soul, and describes how they are on the same tree of cosmic existence. He speaks of the cosmic tree of the *asvattha* which is repeated in the Gita. He explains, while commenting on the verses of the Gita, how the Gita gives the greatest doctrine of works that has ever been bequeathed to man. His own yoga of works is based upon this principle of disinterested work, surrender of fruits to God. He follows up the clue given in the Gita for the reconciliation of the yoga of works, the yoga of knowledge and the yoga of devotion. He shows how each one finds its support, its culmination in the other and all three combine in fulfilling man. It is only in a complete surrender, out of absolute love that you begin to know to what you have surrendered, the real

knowledge comes as a result of love. Knowledge is the crown of love. And when you have deep love, when you have knowledge of what you have surrendered to, you cannot but pour your energies, consecrate your whole life in works for God. So he describes how each has its natural sequence.

He not only synthesises the three lines of yoga, he also assimilates the essence of the Tantras, the principle, particularly of the ascent of the *sakti*, and the descent of the *ananda*, the divine consciousness. He puts it in another language. He says the whole human consciousness has to aspire and steadily rise up and in response there is a supreme Grace from above that answers. This conjunction between an aspiring human consciousness and a descending divine Grace is that which gives the fulfilment. He says we do not need to open laboriously each Chakra, each lotus, each centre and the various fields of consciousness, areas of being which are controlled by these centres; they get naturally opened to the higher Divine Force. It is the higher *sakti* in its wisdom that decides where man is ready to open. He does not follow one uniform system of starting from the bottom mechanically. He not only follows these basic principles of the Tantra weaving them into his Integral Yoga but he gives also great importance to the principle of the Divine Mother—the cosmic *sakti* to whom man has to surrender. The problem is beyond solution by human means. Man has to surrender to the Divine Force. Now whether the divine *sakti* is embodied in a human form or you conceive of it in one of the divine forms which have been regarded and worshipped traditionally it is immaterial. Man has to surrender to the Divine Power. It is the divine *sakti* that acts as a door to the Divine. This is essentially a Tantric heritage. The Gita states the principles that the divine *purusa* is there, *mamaivamsah*, stationed in each man, in each person in the heart. He is the divine *purusa*. Sri Aurobindo makes this a central feature of his teaching, yoga; he emphasises there is a psychic, the inner soul of man which holds the key to the spiritual unfoldment of consciousness. He stresses how it is from the psychic opening, the awakening and the forward coming of the inner soul, that the entire responsibility for the journey towards God is assumed by the divine agent. Man has only to tune himself and to be surrendered to the Divine. This importance of man awakening the divine centre in himself, recognising that the divine is there moving

nature as if mounted on a wheel, as one of the cardinal principles of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

Sri Aurobindo also recognises the contribution of approaches like the Buddhist one. He points out that Buddha was an avatar and he came to establish the truth of Nirguna Brahman, that there is an aspect of the divine reality which is above, which is beyond all definition, what is ineffable, indeterminable, *nirguna*, *nirakara*, He points out that in his effort to release himself from nature, from ego, man has to have this experience of impersonality, of immutability, of static Self, of a witness *purusa*, where he is completely aloof. But he shall not stop there, he must go ahead and realise the dynamic reality of the Supreme. He accepts the contribution, recognises what the Buddha has to give to the spiritual seeker but counsels him to build upon it.

In addition to these individual contexts, Sri Aurobindo continues the Vedic and the Tantric tradition of giving a *collective* from to spiritual life. He is not satisfied with just one person here or one person there realising unity with God. The whole would is a manifestation of God and man as the highest evolute in Nature, the highest representative of God on earth, owes it to his Creator to help convert the entire world gradually, progressively into what he himself has become. This adding of a collective dimension to a spiritual effort is special contribution of Sri Aurobindo. He speaks of a gnostic community, a spiritualised humanity. He asks us not to speak of the time factor. In this great adventure of the spirit, human time is of no consequence. But the effort has to be made. He speaks, in his great works, *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*, how the old Indian ideal of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, the whole world is my family, not just humanity but the entire creation at all levels of existence, is one. In his yoga of integral perfection, there is an interesting state where after you realise the divinity within yourself, after you feel one with the Divine, the next step is to extend your consciousness, to feel one with all—what is called universalisation, cosmicisation. In cosmicisation you impact upon others, you receive their impact. In describing this particular experience of Aswapathy in *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo narrates how the island ego joins its continent, that is, when he breaks out of the barriers of the ego, he hears the thoughts of other people echoing in the corridors of his own mind, his own thoughts being uttered on the

lips of many others, heartbeats of others one with his own. This extension of the individual perfection gradually to the environment is a distinctive contribution of Sri Aurobindo in line with the pristine original Indian spiritual tradition.

This is how Sri Aurobindo continues and enlarges upon the old Indian complex spiritual tradition. But it is not just that. He adds a new dimension in keeping with the growing time-spirit, he gives a fresh direction. He says the whole world is moving towards a spiritual life in which man will exceed himself. Man will first become a universal man and the universal man will be followed by a superman. The key to this development, he traces to the *rta-cit* in the Veda, the *vijnana* in the Upanishads, the *daivi manava* in the Tantra. He formulates, he develops a whole philosophy. He studies the thought of the Western scientists, points out flaws in their thinking, how they are wrong in holding that evolution is of form; it is of form secondarily. Evolution is really of consciousness. It is the consciousness that develops and builds external forms, bodies, to house these emerging and increasing vibrations of consciousness. The consciousness is prior, form is later. Man is on the verge of exceeding himself and this exceeding has to be spiritual in consciousness—the form of man need not change. Man has evolved a sufficient plasticity to adjust himself to changes in consciousness. It is the quality of consciousness, and the range of consciousness that have to change and they are changing. In this, he says, the role of man is capital—it has to be a spiritual effort. All the past of India has prepared for this age, the age of *satya yuga*, where the Truth is to manifest.

So far we have been governed by a mental consciousness, the consciousness of the mind, intellect. Now it is slowly yielding to the reign of Truth-consciousness, *satya-cit*. That Truth-consciousness cannot be realised in the indvidual alone but has to be organised in society because, man can be as perfect as the society of which he is a member is perfect. So, he analyses the society, its historical, the political and the social development and points out how society all over the world has grown through different stages of growth : the symbolic stage, the conventional, the typal stage, the individualist stage, the age of revolt, the subjective age, in which we are involved at present, opening into a spiritual age. The spiritual age of humanity is coinciding with

the spiritual age of man. He envisages as part of this manifestation of Truth, as a result of spiritual endeavour by a number of people—a number of communities, what he calls potential gnostic communities—a formation of a world family, a world unity. Whatever the outer appearances may be, the nations of the world are steadily moving closer. Except in areas of politics and the military everywhere, in ecology, education, economics,—there is a global approach, a global thinking and people are now willing to sit at the table and discuss rather than meet first on the battle grounds and break their heads. This movement of world unity is a part of a spiritual unity that is slowly shaping itself. The ideal to be realised is the Kingdom of God on earth. The Kingdom of God is not *there*—it is always *there* and there is no necessity to speak of it—but *here* on earth. It is not to be only inside us. There have been many saints who have realised this state within themselves leaving the world where it was. But to organise, to establish that kingdom of light, that kingdom of harmony and love on earth as a living society—that is the ideal held forth. And in this—emphasising the possibility, even the certainty of man acquiring the Truth-consciousness and organising a society based upon laws of truth and harmony and making real a Kingdom of God on earth—Sri Aurobindo fulfils and goes beyond the past traditions.

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# THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF DHARMA IN SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION

VASANT V. MERCHANT

## DHARMA, THE INDIAN TRADITION AND SRI AUROBINDO

Of all the values deepest in the racial consciousness and the psyche of India, *dharma* occupies a pride of place. *Dharma* is the most profoundly embedded value in the Indian culture, next only to that of *bhakti*—devotion, faith and love, and that of *yajna-sacrifice.* There have been innumerable illustrations and evidences of the importance of Dharma in the Hindu tradition as amply demonstrated in the *dharma sastras*—Law Books, *Niti Shastra*—Codes of Conduct, *Itihasa*—histories and the vast literature of *puranas*—legendary histories and historical mythologies, including the ancient Indian epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and others, as well as the modern epic of Sri Aurobindo : *Savitri : A Legend and A Symbol.*

Hinduism is a name given in the West to the religious and social institutions of the Hindus. In India, this "league of religions" is called the *sanatana dharma* or the *Eternal Religion* or *Eternal Truth.* It is a complex system of religions, beliefs and culture based on the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Tantras and the Bhagavad Gita. Though extremely diversified, it is still a unified mass of spiritual thought, aspiration and realizations. It is a broad-based religion for it takes into its fold all aspects of truth through

the ages. It is not the religion of the prophet, but the "Law of Dharma of Life" as revealed by many saints, sages, seers, prophets and saviours through the ages. Hinduism is the accumulated wisdom of saints and sages throughout history. It is a dynamic movement of the soul and spirit of life and time itself, and therefore, Hinduism is not a cultish, credal or dogmatic religion. It comprises within its fold Brahmanism, Vaishnavism, Saivism, Saktism, and many of the modern movements of the last hundred years and more. Influences of Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Sufism and Christianity have played a great part in the h storic and religious development of Sanatana Dharma. This is in accord with the dynamic character of Indian religion which grows and expands, as new truth is revealed and unveiled. The Vedic passage exemplifying this principle is "Truth is One; Sages speak of it in various ways"—*ekam sad vipra bahuda vadanti.* Hence, Hinduism is also *vaidika-dharma.*

As can be seen from the above, Hinduism is a dynamic movement, not a static position, not a finished product, but a crowning and enduring tradition, because it is not one fixed revelation of dogma. Its past history encourages us to believe that it will be found equal to any emergency that the future may hold—whether in the field of thought or history or *dharma*—or as ethical and spiritual crises in the practical affairs of men and nations.

## DHARMA AND THE INDIAN CONCEPTION

What then is *dharma* ? And what is its significance in human life and spirit in Sanatana Dharma ?

Dharma, like Karma, is one of the most complex concepts that exists in Hinduism. There is no one single term that defines or does justice to the world *dharma.* The multi-faceted dimensions of Dharma mean duty, righteousness, law, order, right rules of conduct, justice, morality, religion and truth. One of the main elements of Vedic outlook is *dharma*—meaning explicating of *satyam*—Truth—i.e., truth in action, universal truth proceeding directly and unreformed out of the Infinite. *rta*—the eternal cosmic order is the working out of the *satya* or Reality or "That which Is." Rita is also the *dharma* of the later language of Hindu religion, hence *dharma* means the "Right or Divine Law," or 'sacred action' (ri-to rise, tend upward).

Dharma in Sanskrit comes from the verb root *dhr*—to hold, to establish, to formulate, to manifest, to sustain, to unite. Used in the plural, "Dharmas," means the ordained or natural duties of life —whether religious, ethical, social, etc. Dharma, therefore, literally means that which one lays hold of and which holds things together, i.e., the law, the norm, the ideal, the rule of nature, the power and force that constitute action and life. *Ma* refers to the universe, the cosmic mother principle which contains, supports, nurtures, nourishes and sustains the universe and is the basis of it. Therefore, *dharma* means the power and force that holds the entire universe together, formulates it, manifests it, sustains it and unites it as the power of ultimate truth and goodness and beauty. Combined together they spell love. Here Dharma is referred to as Eternal Cosmic Law of Truth and Goodness which holds the individual and society together, moving towards a higher truth of existence. Dharma then is the Divine Law of Truth and Goodness as applied to the individual and collective life of man as fulfilling itself.

In the words of Sri Aurobindo :

> "Dharma in the Indian conception is not merely the good, the right, morality and justice, ethics; it is the whole government of all the relations of man with other beings, with Nature and God. Dharma is both that which we hold to and that which holds together our inner and outer activities, and in this its primary sense it means a fundamental law of our nature which secretly conditions all our activities, and in this sense, each type, species, individual, group has its own dharma. . . Dharma is all that helps us to grow into the divine purity, largeness, light, freedom, power, strength, joy, love, good, unity, beauty." (*Essays on the Gita*, SABCL, '72, 13, pp. 162-63).

Originally the relationship of *dharma* and *yama* is a fascinating one in the Hindu tradition. *Yama* being a form or appellation of the Sun, and later one of the children with *Yami* of the wide-shining lord of Truth, was conceived as the *guardian of dharma*, the law of the Truth, which is the condition of Immortality. Therefore, *yama* himself in this conception was the guardian of immortality.

The so-called hymn of Death (Rig-Veda X, 14) is indeed a

There is no ethical idea which it has not stressed, put in its most ideal and imperative form, enforced by teaching, injunction, parable, artistic creation, formative examples. Truth, honour, loyalty, fidelity, courage, chastity, love, long-suffering, self-sacrifice, harmlessness, forgiveness, compassion, benevolence, beneficence are its common themes, are in its view the very stuff of a right human life, the essence of man's *dharma*." ("A Rationalistic Critic on Indian Culture," SABCL, 1972, 14, pp. 90-91).

*Dharma*, therefore, must not be confused with external behaviour or outward conduct but in the Indian tradition, *dharma* is an expression of the soul-state. The *dharma* then, at once becomes like a spiritual law of action as also a deepest law of our nature which is the right law of functioning of our life with effectiveness in all different aspects.

The individual differences in human beings are due to their respective natures, their level of development, their psychic temperament, their interests, aptitudes and abilities—i.e., the difference of *adhikara*—capacity. Therefore, their *dharmas* differ too according to their species, type and class and each activity—civic, social, aesthetic, ethical or religious, performed according to the limits of ability and reach of one's body, life, mind and soul whether one is a scholar, priest, artist, ruler, labourer, scientist, engineer, administrator, businessman or governor *et al.* Thus, *dharma* became a rule of right practice, satisfaction, expansion and regulation. This harmony with the law of one's social type and class, individually and collectively—fostered a higher reach of humanity. Thus living and acting one could learn to transcend the social scale of *dharma*, since it was not merely a safeguard but a light, a reminder of the continuity of life and man's long pilgrimage through varied births. *Dharma* then is a reminder of *a vision* of the progressive unity and perfect comprehension of divine transcendence. Both Hinduism and Buddhism emphasized this for the life and service of humanity.

The whole right practice of life founded on this knowledge was in the view of Indian culture a *dharma*, a living according to a just understanding and right view of self-culture. The universal embracing of *dharma* in the Indian idea is a law of ideal perfection for the developing mind and soul of man, and stresses the growth

of universal qualities which in their harmony and development build a highest type of manhood. This ideal—the law of the Best—of the self-perfecting individual is described by such terms as: *arya*—the noble and good man, *srestha*—of highest quality, *sajjana*—the gentleman and *sadhu*—the humane one.

This ideal included not only ethical and moral dimensions, but also included the aesthetic, intellectual, social and religious flowering of the entire ideal of man toward the perfection of the total human nature embracing all human relationships—those of a parent, husband and wife, brother and sister, friend and friend, ruler and subject, master and servant, priest or warrior or worker, king or sage, employer and employee, guru and the disciple, etc. All human actions and activities thus were lifted and guided to greater aims by the ideal of *dharma.*

Another central conception of Hindu religion and culture is that of the *avatara.* The *avatara* represents the descent of divinity in earth life. When the crisis in the earth life has a spiritual seed or intention, then a complete or a partial manifestation of God-consciousness incarnates in a human mind and body, and the soul comes as its originator or leader. That constitutes the *avatara.*

When does the *avatara*—incarnation of Divinity on earth—tend to appear ?

The popular notion is that when lack of righteousness, absence of moral codes of conduct, deterioration and failure of social, political and ethical observations of law and justice, and oppression and tyranny prevail, the *avatara* descends to deliver the good and destroy the wicked, the breakdown in justice and eliminate oppression and restore the ethical balance of humanity.

While *dharma* is generally spoken of as eternal and unchanging in its fundamental principle and the ideal, its forms and expressions go through a continual process of change in the evolutionary process of consciousness. All that helps this growth into higher development is *dharma,* all that stands against it and is the opposite of *dharma* is *a-dharma*—viz. resistance to Dharma, unrighteousness, the shadow and denial of Dharma; perversion, impurity, darkness, vileness, discord, narrowness, bigotry, bondage, division, the hideous and the crude and the force that lacks integrity and makes for evil, ignorance and darkness is a-dharma.

The Vedic image refers to the struggle between the Divine and the Titanic powers, the sons of Right and the indivisible Truth and

Infinity and the powers of the *dasyus*—of Darkness and Division. Zoroastrianism speaks of a constant duality at the heart of the cosmos, symbolized by *Ahuramazda*—the force of light and truth and *Ahriaman*—the force of darkness and falsehood, and in Judaism the struggle between *Yahweh* and the Satan, and in Christianity, the contest between God and his angels and the Devil/Satan or Iblis and the demons for the possession of human life and the human soul. Thus, *a-dharma* is the enemy of spiritual light and power.

There is a spiritual basis for the Avatar to appear in addition to all the worldly and the ethical reasons. Sri Aurobindo expostulates :

> "The crisis in which the *avatara* appears, though apparent to the outward eye only as a crisis of events and great material changes, it always in its source and real meaning a crisis in the consciousness of humanity when it has to undergo some grand modification and effect some new development. For this action of change a divine force is needed; but the force varies always according to the power of consciousness which it embodies; hence the necessity of a divine consciousness manifesting in the mind and soul of humanity. . . the Avatar may descend as a great spiritual teacher and saviour, the Christ, the Buddha, but always his work leads. . . to a profound change. . . as is represented in the story of *Rama* or *Krishna*; but always then this descent becomes in the soul of the race a permanent power for the inner living and the spiritual rebirth." ("The Divine Birth and Divine Works," *Essays On the Gita*, SABCL, 1972, 13, pp. 161-62).

## WHAT IS THE VALUE AND PURPOSE OF THE AVATAR ?

The *avatara's* permanent truth and value according to Sri Aurobindo; lies in its persistence as a spiritual form, presence and influence in the inner consciousness of the race and the life of the human soul. According to Sri Aurobindo, *avtarhood* is a fact of divine life and consciousness which may realise itself in an outward action, but must persist to exemplify, through one's life and spiritual influence and teaching the permanent effect on the inner thought and temperament and the outer life of humanity. The

purpose and the nature of the *avatara* is to become the soul of the *dharma* and the *sangha*—the solidarity of the group, and inform and lead them toward felicity and liberation. The purpose of the *avatara* is to uplift the consciousness of humanity and show it the next series of steps in the ascent of consciousness.

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE AVATAR

The *avatara* comes to the earth to aid, directly and indirectly, the outer struggle of the race against evil-doers and destory ignorance and reign of the *asuras* and enables to bring man nearer to the Kingdom of heaven on earth in the collectivity as well as to build the kingdom of heaven within the individual human soul. The *avatara* thus comes to the heart of man to destroy *enemies within*—in the inner struggle, and the outer battle that the Gita has stressed greatly.

Few writers, Indian or non-Indian, ancient, medieval or modern, have produced such a vast, prodigious and prolific amount of serious prose and poetry as Sri Aurobindo has done. The range and scope of his monumental writings are of a magnitude and influence unparalleled, in its originality and creativity in his vision of the future destiny of man and the ascent and descent of consciousness, in the evolutionary and involutionary process as necessary complements of the gigantic movement of the Spirit. Sri Aurobindo represents the synthesis of the consummate genius of the best values of the East and the West.

Indian spirituality, by far the richest and the profoundest, the largest and the widest and most complex is the most exalted many-sided spirituality in the world.

In the earlier development of Sri Aurobindo's yoga, the Bhagavad Gita played a major role, and in his study of this great work—monumentally great and perennially living in its life-giving greatness—his book : *Essays on the Gita*, is perhaps the best of his works to read first.

Anyone truly concerned with the present day world crises and the crises of our age, cannot in all sincerity afford to be ignorant of Sri Aurobindo and the solution to man's problems that he alone offers. This solution lies in finding one's true self that. is a triune being—individual, universal and transcendent at the same time, not as an embracing of something "mysterious" or "exotic," or

being a slave to the old accustomed ways.

Sri Aurobindo himself has been called the *avatara* of the New Age. Unparalleled in the history of the human race and its literature, he gives us the vision of a *sakti avatara*—a saviour of humanity—in "Savitri : A Legend and a Symbol," his modern epic where *Savitri*—the daughter of Light—is the very instrument of transformation of earth life and the perfection of man in the individual and the collectivity.

"Savitri" of Sri Aurobindo is rightly called "the Veda of the New Age." It was Rabindranath Tagore, the first Asian Nobel Prize Winner who called Sri Aurobindo "the Soul Incarnate of India" in the crises of its destiny as the *avatara*. Indian Independence Day—viz., August 15 (1947) was deliberately chosen on Sri Aurobindo's birthday to deepen, widen and heighten the spiritual purpose and mission of India's destiny and a future.

## SWABHAVA AND SWADHARMA

The realization that "all life is a lavish and manifold opportunity, given to us to seek, to discover, to find, to express and realize the Divine." These words of Sri Aurobindo represent the crux of existence and that true Soul or spiritual development and progress are *not bound* by or dependent on country, race, religion, social or economic or political status or on the material factors of ancestry, parentage, physical birth, which in Sri Aurobindo's view are subordinate, and one effective sign perhaps, but not the dominant principle. Sri Aurobindo holds that *sahaja karma* does *not in itself* imply a heredity basis. The word *sahaja* means that which is born with us, whatever is natural, inborn, innate; its equivalent in all other passages is *svabhavaja*. The work or function of a man is determined by his qualities, *karma* is determined by *guna* (anyone of the essential modes of energy of the three primal qualities—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—that form the nature of things). It is essentially the work born of one's *svabhava*, *svabhavajam karma*. Thus, in Sri Aurobindo's explanation, the Gita's idea of Karma and its whole sense, emphasizes the inner quality and spirit which finds expression in work, function, and action in understanding of Karma. But the Divine is the birthright of every individual. This is where Sri Aurobindo places greater importance of Dharma and its power to change doubts and

difficulties, perplexities and perils, and convert tragedies to openings and opportunities from the emphasis on the inner truth and not the outer form—to find freedom and peace in the realization of one's *svabhava* through *svadharma*. Soul and Nature have to overcome the enmeshes of the ego, the knotty chains of passions and desires, the prison house of the body, mind and the spirit, the bondages of ignorance and avidya, the acute needs of the persistent moment and its pains, and the obscurity of the vision and the uncertain movement of the life force and its supreme battle—within and without.

That is what *kuruksetra* is—the whole field of life, existence and mind and its struggles—on different parts and planes of the being in the field of forces—individually and collectively, morally and spiritually and universally. Thus, *kuruksetra* is the plane of human consciousness and activity and is the field of manifestation and testing ground of *dharma*. Therefore, "*dharmaksetre kuruksetre,*" the opening line of the Gita, translated from Sanskrit means : This life is the battlefield of Divine Action. Therefore, *dharma* is Divine Action(s) fulfilling a Divine Law of Truth and Goodness and Beauty. Thus, *dharma* becomes the basis of morality, social duties, legality religion, custom, tradition, worship, rites, ceremonies, sacrifice and so on. There is no situation in life where *dharma* does not exist. Everything and everyone in the universe has his/her *dharma*. *Dharma* has been diversely defined to mean a multiplicity of concepts from natural duties and obligations to law and order and justice and responsibility, to loyalty and righteousness to purpose, and fulfilment. So complex is *dharma* in its dimensions and expressions.

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## WHAT SRI AUROBINDO MEANS TO ME

SURYA

Once the Mother said that the root cause for anything is the whole universe at the given moment. The reasons given by a person for his being at a given place doing a given thing rather than at another place doing another thing, are merely a presentation of material that permits itself to be converted into the currency of words and logic valid for the time and place.

I have been a physician and then a psychiatrist. By temperament and necessity my work led me to look into the mechanics and dynamics of human behaviour as a whole.

The purely mechanist model of the human body adopted by medical practice, treating it as an object, as a test-tube for pills to be put in or as a robot to repair by cutting off or by implanting new parts, seemed unsatisfactory to me. The body and the I are one dialectic unity not laboratory-produced by man or by a committee of many expert men.

The little of scriptures I had read like the Gita or Dhammapada indicated to me, provoked in me many questions but did not offer practical interactional guidance. The role of the physical body was not delineated with sufficient cogency to enable me to use them as practical guidance in day-to-day work with 'bodies'. Why the body at all, has been left vague. Explicitly or implicitly they left me with the impression that the dody is a burdensome appendage to be got rid off, a caprice of nature or a play of gods. When the answer to this important question, "Why

the body at all," is left nebulous, then why the plethora of austerities and injunctions to which it is required to submit itself. Interpretative authority rather than personal inquiry rules the day and isms mushroom up. The problem of human health is intimately tied up with the goal of human life in the individual or the collective. At all times, perhaps, but most markedly today man seeks an answer to the question of why the body, and also a satisfactory working model of body-self interaction, at least sufficient enough to interest him further in the inquiry. Both practical religion and practical science have failed to satisfy me and my work concerned with living bodies.

Sri Aurobindo's work gave me a perspective of the whole problem of the body and its interactions with the self. This was not just a theoretical verbal dissertation. The life and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother gifted a whole range of practical guidance to enable an interested worker to pursue the inquiry with increasing confidence. Anyone, especially a physician, must constantly explore within himself, in the course of day-to-day life, this body-self interaction in order to have any influence on the total health of the persons that come to him. This is or ought to be the first step.

I resigned from my post as head of a teaching and research institution of mental health and the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram graciously accepted me into the Ashram.

The attitude adopted by me to the best of my ability was that of a professional student in a professional college. I had chosen for myself the profession of self-changing oneself into a more effective and harmonious instrument of health. Aspiration and effort and sincerity towards changing oneself to a better model, to me, is the key note of the Mother's teaching, or at least the keynote I had chosen. The factors and forces and parts and functions involved in this self-change are indeed many, but the first requirement seemed to me to be a person who says, "I am dissatisfied with myself; I desperately want and need to change myself," and a person who remembers that he said so, and a person who does not forget he said so.

While changing oneself has been recognised by many spiritual organisations, they are overlaid in practice by philanthropical occupations to such an extent that one can hardly be blamed if the suspicion is there that their main occupation is to change others in

the name of helping or saving them from themselves.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their own bodily lifetime explored the paths and powers needed for transformation of the human frame to enable it to express a new type of behaviour on this earth, here. I cannot pretend to grasp all that they have seen or said, but for my work it is sufficient to say that they have left a mass of practical guidance enough to occupy me many lifetimes. Understanding to me does not come from books, but only from my body actually doing what it wants to learn.

I have learnt, thanks to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, that trying to change myself and the intricate mechanism therein is the most effective way of meeting the multitude of vicissitudes that assail it from every direction. To the degree this is done, to that degree the external environment effectively changes. The human society is a complexly interconnected collective nervous system. Each one acts as a reflector for the other. The present social chaos is the result of the laser-like effect of the disturbance in each single person reflected million, trillion fold from each other directly and through the mass media. If one single person, instead of passively reflecting the chaos and disturbance he receives, were to transform what is received within himself, and then only release it, the results might be better for society, but it, certainly, is good for personal health as this action protects the personal body from destructive wear and tear. The proverbial no-see evil, no-hear evil, no-speak evil monkeys of religion will need a whole welfare institution for the deaf, dumb and blind in this wicked world. The Mother said that the reception of all vibrations and their inner transformation and subsequent transmission was the task for which Sri Aurobindo came on earth and to tell others how to do it. To the interested apprentice who wants to know how and what, the answer is seriously to go practically into their guidance as best as one can. Mere reading helps to improve one's glossary and gives an illusion of understanding which is unfortunate but usual.

This particular angle to the vibrations of interaction has been of great help to me in my healthy work.

With regard to total bodily health, the concepts of paying attention and/or directing harmonious consciousness to the various parts of the body in great detail; of the need for setting ever higher goals of performance for body and mind to bring out

the best in them have been most helpful. It was not the concepts as such but the extremely practical clues and pointers they have delineated that are of great help to the interested student of human evolution.

For someone like me who has chosen to study, to learn the processes of human behaviour, taking myself as the first sample, to study in depth this sample, the Ashram has been the very life-breath. It appears to be a selfish occupation, but I now see more and more clearly that if concern for the correction of one's own instrument is not there, all its so-called efforts at helping others can lead to disasters. This does not mean sitting in a dark cave in a forest meditating on self-transformation. It is in the very middle of life that the transformation is to be progressively achieved. All that is asked is to learn to keep your attention on your own dash-board which piloting your vehicle called the body.

Meticulous personal experiment is necessary. The apprentice interested in learning has to methodically involve his body in perfecting its parts, powers and functions. The methods may vary, but the need for the same degree of precision and dedication displayed by a scientist trying to manipulate or modify a complex computer is underlined. Sri Aurobindo's work on fasting in its bodily economy; the Mother's meticulous work trying to establish the relation between the flowers of blessing and duration of effects, and many more examples and statements can be found in numbers sufficient to underline the importance they attached to the scientific experimental approach for an intelligent man engaged in conscious evolution of himself as an effective instrument. As long as the personal 'I' remains, the need for this process of accurate observation, experiment and experience in mutually enriching spirals seems necessary. If the need for learning the skills of piloting one's own body is desperately felt in the interests of personal and public safety, it is easy to see that most of us give to the learning of these skills for this most complex machine on earth called our body, not even a fraction of the time given to the learning of the driving of a car. If this need for personal practical involvement is not felt, then the pages of the Vishuddhi Marga of Buddhist teaching and the pages of Sri Aurobindo's Synthesis of Yoga might not be of much help to the serious apprentice.

The present state of the world is very much like that of a

large number of drunken drivers devising rules of the road for safe-driving.

The Ashram and its residents provide a lively dedicated and challenging milieu in which one is exposed to a rich variety of material and interpersonal interactions loosely enmeshed in bewildering bonds of love, freedom, authority and discipline all emerging from the one thread that holds all to the teachers and the goal set by them.

Following strictly the instruction of the Mother not to speak of matters beyond my knowledge I have refrained from trying to speak of esoteric knowledge beyond my understanding.

For me, Sri Aurobindo Ashram has been the most satisfying university where I have learnt and continue to learn the science and profession of human health in its evolutionary totalily. I am greateful to my teachers for having made me see that a health-worker who is not constantly engaged in progressively transforming himself into a more and more healthy and harmonious human being is of dubious if not decisively dangerous effects.

This article does not fully convey all that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother mean to me. It is outside of any consensually shareable experience. I shall not undertake a futile exercise in communicating the incommunicable.

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## SRI AUROBINDO'S CONCEPT OF EVOLUTION*

M.P. PANDIT

The whole question of evolution or otherwise arises when we begin to think how this world came to be, who has created this universe. There are many traditions. There is an age-old tradition of the Tantras which says that in the beginning there is only that Principle which we call Parashiva, the Absolute, the One. When the Parashiva is moved to manifest himself, to create, the moment he feels in his self-musing that he should create, he becomes two; the One becomes two. Parashiva becomes Shiva and Shakti. You will see that Shiva and Shakti are not two different entities, but one positing itself as two for purposes of creation. Thereafter, there are sub-divisions; we have different systems, some saying that there are 24 principles of creation, some 36 and so on. We do not enter into them here. Allied or parallel to this tradition there is what we call the Vedantic tradition, equally sanctified. The Supreme Reality is One; it is the Absolute, we cannot say what it is, we cannot understand it; the Upanishads say now our speech, and our mind, when they try to reach the Absolute fall back without attaining to That, but when the Absolute moves towards manifestation it reveals itself to the uplooking human intelligence as a triune reality,—not three things, but triune : Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, This Existence is by

*Address at Poona University, November 26, 1977,

itself, nothing has caused it, it is there; but it is not an inert existence. It is fully conscious, awake and the nature of this Consciousness is Delight, Bliss. And all creation issues through this Delight, that is why the Upanishad says that out of Delight all things are born, by Delight they are sustained and in their passing they enter into Delight. Who could live, who could breathe if there were not this ether of Delight ? All creation is an emanation of Delight, Bliss.

Sri Aurobindo is in line with this tradition. He observes in *Savitri* how Bliss and Delight are at the root of things. If that is the nature of creation, how come that we don't feel that delight, we don't feel that bliss in the life around us ? What we see around is struggle and suffering, pain and evil. From where have appeared these opposite things ? Some who want to absolve the creator from responsibility for these reverse elements, say it is the work of the Satan, the Devil. But this does not satisfy the logical mind. If God is supreme, if God is omnipotent, why should he allow this Devil to do havoc ? There are others who say that this creation is not a direct creation of God but it is a figment of imagination imposed by a inexplicable power on the white bosom of the Eternal. The world does not affect that. Thus, effort is made in many ways to free God from responsibility for pain and suffering. Sri Aurobindo does not accept this position. He says : The Divine Reality is not something there on the heights and the creation here left to itself. God is not there sitting allowing you to whirl round and round in suffering, struggle. In his view which is based upon his perception,—perception which is based on realisation, corroborated by the experiences and realisations of other mystics,—God is *there* , but God is also *here*, he is in All. When I suffer, God too suffers. It is one thing to say that God is there above creation and its suffering and another thing to say that God himself undergoes all the suffering, all the pain.

I remember, somewhere in 1934 a great French thinker, Maurice Magre wrote a letter to the Mother saying it is all very well to say that God has created this world but how is it that this creation does not have the characteristics of God ? What are we to make of it ? How do you account for a thing which is created by a Being, a Divine Being of Beauty, of Power, of Knowledge, of Bliss, having all features which are the exact opposite ? The Mother wanted to take out a few extracts from Shri Aurobindo's

book, *The Life Divine*, have it translated in French and sent to him. But on coming to know that, Sri Aurobindo preferred to write a reply exclusively to this question and he wrote a classic letter which forms part of a book entitled, *The Riddle of this World.* In substance, he says that the level of existence, the plane where this phenomenon of creation originates is far above the level of the human mind and the mind cannot grasp or comprehend the truth of it. But you know Sri Aurobindo was a poet and he proceeds to speak in a series of poetic images.

The Supreme Being, the Devine Being, is musing; the Tantras speak of the Being musing within himself, *vimarsa*; and while musing on all that is contained in himself, the glory of Sat and Chit and Ananda, the glories of Existence, Knowledge, Force, immortality, eternity, there occurs an idea, a possibility where all this Glory could exist in conditions which are the very opposite of what obtain there. And the moment this possibility presents itself to the Divine Being, it gets translated into an actuality. That is a challenge which the Divine Adventurer takes up and he goes abroad; his consciousness goes forth from that status to see whether these high truths of the Divine Being can or cannot manifest in conditions which are the contrary and there is a plunge of a Divine Consciousness. From its heights, as it gets down and down, it becomes more and more dense till it reaches the extreme, the nadir of descent where it gets completely lost in a state of nescience. The supreme Existence becomes Non-Existence, the supreme Consciousness becomes Nescience, the supreme Delight becomes complete Insentience. At that moment, when everything seems to be lost, all has undergone a transformation into its exact opposite, the divine Soul which came forth is in distress and it sends a call, an S.O.S. to the parent Divine and the occult Tradition has it that the Divine Being sends forth a ray of Light which is the first descent of Grace on earth and that recovers the almost lost divine Entity and sets it back on the journey towards the Divine.

It will not do to take these images in too rigid a sense but we have an idea. This descent of Divine Consciousness is termed devolution, as it descends from its supreme status, it devolves; and in the course of this devolution it forms planes, worlds of existence, subtle, less subtle, gross, more gross, till the grossest condition is arrived at in this fragmented condition of Matter which we call.

*tucchya* in the Rigveda.

Now these are the worlds which the Vedas speak, the seven worlds, the seven stations, *saptadhama*, *saptaloka*, these are the worlds that are formed by the descending Consciousness, each world more gross, less subtle than the previous one, and a whole stair of descent is formed building the worlds the last stage of which is our physical material world. The Consciousness has got concretised, the Spirit has got congealed and has become hard Matter. The return journey is called evolution. Evolution negates an arbitrary creation, creation according to a whim; each thing is not created separately by itself but each proceeds from some thing anterior. There is a law, there is a base, there is a rhythm, there is a sense behind it. That is why the Taittiriya Upanishad says *prajna netro ayam lokah*, this world has wisdom for its eye; it is not a work of fortuitous chance; a great Intelligence has caused it, a great Intelligence is leading it. That is why in Nature, in the plant and the animal creation, everywhere we see things following a law, an order. The erratic stages, the unpredictable stages come only with the human mind.

As I said there is a Consciousness that is involved. There can be no evolution of anything unless what is evolved was already involved; something has to be there inside before it starts showing up; the seed has to be there in the soil, before the leaves sprout. There can be no evolution without involution and what is involved is the divine Spirit, the divine Consciousness which has merged, buried itself and in a state and form of matter, what is called in Sanskrit *prithvi*. And this consciousness within acts like a nisus, goes on prodding from inside, it wants to come out. It takes a long time but in its effort to come out it is constantly supported by a pressure from the higher world, a corresponding world from above. This is the principle of *arohana* and *avarohana* which is so picturesquely described in the Tantras, which is also spoken of in the Vedas, it is a movement from two ends. Now where there was just a fragmentation of inconscience, *apraketam salilam*, where there was no consciousness, no form, slowly, as a result of this urge from inside, small particles of matter get formed, these particles of matter come together and the material creation comes into being. This material creation when it comes to be looks as if it is dead, there is only hard matter. But the consciousness inside is still struggling to come out and with the helpful pressure

from the life-world, *pranaloka* above, a life-movement breaks forth. It is at first a very slight movement, it comes and dies, appears and disappears, sensibility starts. In course of time it begins to form into little greens, and we have the beginning of life-creation; where there was dead matter a life-creation starts. This life-creation is consciousness organising itself in the form of life. The first stage is consciousness organising itself as matter, the second is consciousness organising itself as life, and life,—first the simple forms of life, later more complicated forms of life and so on. Each form of life is instinct with consciousness.

Two thousand years ago, long before the age of modern science, it was Manu who said *antahsanjna bhavanti,* etc., all these have a consciousness, an awareness in them. Today, modern sciences are confirming the same truth approaching from the other end. A consciousness is there and that is evolving, emerging, but it is not the end. It develops still further and then comes the animal kingdom. This animal creation also starts in small insect creatures, develops into larger and larger forms till the animal stage is fulfilled. The rudiments of what is called mind in man are seen as the animal develops. And at the highest level of animal creation there emerges a being who is the forefather of man, the human kind. Thus, does the involved consciousness evolve from state to state upto man. Between the primitive man and the present man, millions of years have passed, nature is taking a very slow course, but the movement is on, there is always a pressure from above, from the higher worlds to develop the consciousness more and more.

We have after the primitive man, the man with an articulate intelligence. Yesterday, I was speaking of the sense mind, the reasoning mind, then the thought mind; each is a stage in the evolution of consciousness taking higher and higher forms of mind, in raising the level of consciousness higher and higher. We have in our Indian tradition the parable of ten *avatars.* One of the possible interpretations which I would like to present to you is this; the first *avatara* was a fish avatar, because in the beginning it was all water, there was no matter, so the divine is represented as presiding over the water creation, *matsyavatara.* After some ages it is the amphibious one, the tortoise, which can both live in water and on land, *kurmavatara.* Then there is pure land animal, the boar, *varaha.* After that there is the half-animal and half-man,

*narasimha*, half-lion, half-man. Thereafter arrives man, but the small dwarf man, *vamana*. Then comes the avatar of the rajasic man, man with violent passion, he is *parasurama*; then comes the avatar of the sattvic mind, the light of God in the mind, establishing order with the help of the restless energies of the mind symbolised by the *vanaras*; they are subdued and put on his side and the ten-headed Ravana who represents the hydra-headed violent ego, passion, ambition is conquered by the sattvic balance and ordered mental harmony is established. That is *Ramavatara*. Then follows Lord *Krishna* who brings the truth of light, establishes the reign of beauty and joy. He establishes the rule of the overmind higher than the mind. Then comes *Buddha* who shows the way to achieve liberation into the impersonal, the *nirakara*. Reality shoots straight into the formless. This world is put at a discount. And the last *avatara* is visualised as someone who will come on a white charger and redress the balance between the impersonal and the personal, the balance that had been disturbed by the Buddha and restore the importance of the world, establish it as the figure and kingdom of God. The horse represents in the Vedic symbolism Power, white symbolises purity. So the new avatar, new manifestation of the Divine, Kalki, is going to come in terms of pure white spiritual Energy.

This is the line of evolution which Nature has taken, the divine consciousness embodied in Nature has taken, and man is not the end of the evolutionary process. Man, as you are all aware, is a very incomplete being, his body is subject to disintegration and decay, his life-energies are very limited, his mind is constricted. Certainly he cannot be the crown of Nature's evolution. Man is a transitional being. Down the ages he is showing newer and newer powers and potentialities. Things which were undreamt of are revealing themselves in him, the genius is a promise of what is still to evolve. Beyond our thought mind, thinking capacities, there are other levels; other powers of consciousness and man is destined to do his journey from grade to grade. Left to Nature, it will take thousands and thousands of years for man to do the full grade but man marks a stage when this evolutionary process enters into a self-conscious direction, man can determine his own role, speed and direction. It is in the hands of man to forge disciplines, to hew ways and means by which he can precipitate, telescope the processes of Nature and finish within

a hundred years or two what it might take many thousands of years for the slowly meandering evolutionary nature to achieve, and this is where yoga comes in.

Yoga is nothing but capturing of a process from Nature and precipitating it in our lives with self-direction towards the end in our view. And the direction and goal towards which the human evolution proceeds is to make man perfect, also a perfect man in a perfect world. Man is to be freed from the limitations, limitations within himself, limitations around himself, limitations from above. Such a perfect man will be something more than a god, or gods of whom we hear so much in the Puranas. All the powers of his emerging consciousness will embody themselves and because he is essentially divine, his will be a divine nature, a divine life. And that divine consciousness is not to be attained somewhere in a Vaikuntha, in heaven or a paradise, but here on earth; *ihaiva santah*, say the Upanishadic sages. Here we should enjoy the kingdom and the glory and bliss of God and man is capable of it. If we see suffering, if we see struggle around us, it is because we are in the midst of a process. As evolution proceeds, as we take steps to increase the elements of knowledge, elements of order, the elements of control in ourselves, the suffering, the pain recedes. It is a local, temporary circumstance of life that there is so much of pain, so much of struggle. As we evolve, the more negative things are displaced by the positive ones.

I would invite your attention to the recent findings of a Christian thinker, Teillard de Chardin. He was a French Jesuit, a missionary who was very much interested in Science. He worked in the first world war carrying patients on stretchers. He was sent to China where he lived for over 20 years and his interest was Paleontology. Now you know the conceptions and the traditions of Christian theology, how God created all things in six days and on the seventh day he relaxed. It is very difficult for a Christian Father to think of anything else. But he had the sincerity and also the temerity to probe into things and come to certain conclusions. But when those conclusions were submitted to the Church, they were naturally not found acceptable; and he was asked not to publish them in his life-time. Now some 20 to 25 years later, his writings originally written in French are being published. They are also translated in English. Now what he says is very interesting. Briefly : this universe is a field and a scene of the evolution of a

mighty consciousness. It is a divine spirit that is doing its grades. First there is the realm of stone, everything is hard stone. Consciousness is there in the form of stone, he calls it lithosphere. Afterwards life erupts and creates what he calls biosphere. a long time, mind, a mental principle, comes up and we have what is called noosphere. And certainly, the divine Spirit that has created all this is not going to st p with the present stage of disorder and disharmony. We are rapidly moving, he says, the whole evolutionary movement,—individual and collective,—is moving towards a new stage. We are entering into a period when the human mind is reaching its utmost limit, it cannot develop further in its present term. It has reached its highest; it is going to explode, it is going to leap into something beyond it; it has reached, he says, what he calls the omega point, the highest optimum. Humanity is now touching the omega point and due to the pressure of historical circumstances or the universal life circumstance, all mankind will steadily come together and there will be a culmination in a new being, in a new consciousness, in what he calls Christosphere. The culmination is in the body of Christ. Not all scholars are agreed where this Christosphere is, beyond or here. Some hold that the Christosphere is beyond the present universe, it is there in the Kingdom and that *there* will be the culmination. No, says Sri Aurobindo; the culmination is here, it is intended to be here. Man is intended to grow here into a figure of God. In man the highest powers of knowledge, strength, delight, immortality are to displace the negative ones, the kingdom of heaven is to be established here, here on earth. Earth is the scene of evolution, earth is the field where progress can be made. The Vishnu Purana says if the gods want to progress, if they want to reach the Supreme, they have to take the human birth here on earth. The earth has something special about it, it is here that the psychic principle, the soul principle, and the law of evolution exist. This law of evolution, Sri Aurobindo says, does not prevail upon other planes of existence which are typal worlds where things are organised, perfectly patterned, but there is no progressive movement. Evolution holds the promise, everything is ordered, everything moves in an ordered direction, from the lower to the higher, from the simpler to the more complex. The plenary manifestation of God, when it takes place, will create here something more than Vaikuṇtha because Vaikuntha on the earth is

richer than the Vaikuntha in heaven. That is an efflorescence of the Divine Consciousness and the Divine Being, a real *satya yuga*, the age of truth, *krta*, achievement. This in brief, in simple terms, is what Sri Aurobindo means by evolution. He does not admit that this a world of chance, he does not admit that we are all slaves of some law of determinism, he holds we have a certain free will. Evolution loses its meaning unless there is freedom to evolve. Whatever may be his subjection to the iron law in certain parts of his nature, he is essentially free; the soul is free, his mind has a sense of freedom, a sense of choice. Sri Aurobindo says that free will and determination are co-existing truths and man can share this or that according whether he lives on lower levels of nature-consciousness or he lives on the altitudes of his soul, on the summits of the mind nearer the spirit. And that is the whole basis of Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of *The Life Divine*. Life Divine is possible because a divine consciousness is in evolution and we are evolutes, products of this evolution. We are not thrown up by some fortuitous chance. There is a past behind us, there is a future that beckons us.

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# THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER : SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION

INDRA SEN

## I. THE YOGA ITSELF

**(1) The Yoga of Nature**

All nature is in a process of growth of evolution. Matter, Life, Mind and Spirit are the obvious ascending terms of this process. It is only at the level of self-conscious mind that growth or Yoga becomes a conscious and willed process. Up till then it is nature's unconscious Yoga, governed by its own laws. Thus in fact, "All life is Yoga.")

**(2) The Conscious Yoga**

(Yoga in this seeking and the effort, conscious and sub-conscious, for a larger and a fuller life, for the Plenitude of Being, for Knowledge, Power, Love and Bliss, for the union of the human individual with the Universal and the Transcendent, for the growth of consciousness in depth, in width and in height, for the fullest development of the potentialities of human nature, for the union of man with God and the manifestation of the Divine on earth).

## II. The Initial Approach to Yoga

**(1) The Call, the Curiosity and the Urge**

The Divine's call to the soul, the soul's call to the Divine, the mind's curiosity regarding the supraphysical and the urge of the vital and the physical for a larger living).

**(2) The General Conditions of the Yogic Pursuit**

(Utsaha (the zeal), Shastra (the knowledge of the principles governing the yogic realisation), Guru (the teacher, his direct suggestion, example and influence) and Time (as the medium and instrument of Yogic pursuit, as all things have a cycle, a period, a thythm in their unfoldment and action).

**(3) The Central Resolve to Pursue Yoga**

(A time comes in the growth of one's interest in Yoga, when the individual clearly feels that yoga is eminently worth doing and his energies turn towards it and he decides and resolves that he shall do it. This is the moment of his central resolve to pursue yoga. After that many difficulties and doubts can arise but some thing central to his personality sticks to it and persists in the feeling that yoga is worth doing).

## III. The Preparation of the Adhar (The Human Vessel)

(Its training, education and growth from the egoistic personality of selfishness and narrowness, of strain and struggle, of sorrow and suffering, of weakness and incapacity to the psychic, spiritual and supramental personalities of joy, spontaneity, freedom, mastery, love and integral knowledge).

This is the essential human journey, the ascent to the (Divine).

**(A) General Processes or Movements (Primarily of Personal Effort)**

**(1) Aspiration and Rejection**

(Aspiration, deep and sincere, for the true and the good and the beautiful, for the Supreme and the Highest, and rejection, steady and effective, of all that is contrary).

**(2) Self-giving and the Surrender (Self-Givingness and Self-Surrender Versus Self-Acquisitiveness and Self-Assertion)**

(The narrow and the lower self of egoistic self-assertion and acquisitiveness has to be given up in order that the individual be be born into the larger spiritual self of love and sympathy, of unity and wideness).

**(3) The Openness**

(Being appreciative of the Divine, as the supreme commanding existence and as the highest Mother Power tending all creation, and being full of seeking and adoration for them. Being turned towards them and receptive to their influence and being turned away from things and influences contrary).

**(4) The Practice of Equality, Inner Quietude and Peacefulness**

(This is normally the first exercise in the yogic pursuit. We try to take the varying contacts and impacts of life with quality, quietude and peacefulness. Thus, we achieve a little freedom from our passionate involvements in things external).

**(5) The Progressive Self-Stand-Back**

(A self-detachment from the movements and reactions of the mind (its ideas), the vital (its desires) and the physical (its habits) and a steady and continuous seeking for the psychic being, the evolving individual soul deep within us).

**(6) The Will for Self-Purification**

The progressive reduction and elimination of selfishness, egocentricity, self-assertion, personal preferences, confusions of desires, ideas, emotions, etc., and the will for the joy of clarity and peace and good will and love).

**(7) The Will for Looking Within and Seeking for Living and Acting from Within**

(The replacement of subjection to external pressures by freedom and inner guidance. *Antarmukhata*, the inner poise vs. *Bahirmukhata*, the externalist attitude).

**(8) The Progressive Growth of Faith**

(Faith in the higher, the spiritual, the Divine Grace, in soul

and in God and a simultaneous growth in the sincerity of the yogic pursuit).

**(9) Practice of Concentration in the Region of the Heart and the Head**

(This is a systematic exercise of daily practice which leads to the discovery of the psychic being, the seat of true individuality and delight and love and the Self above, the seat of wide universality and peace).

**(10) Pursuit of Sadhana as the All-Comprehending Interest of Life**

(Pursuit of sadhana not as an additional interest among other interests, but as the primary interest of life capable of affording the overall fulfilment and of comprehending other interests when rightly pursued. Thus all life can be turned into sadhana and made a powerful movement capable of producing results).

**(B) Specific Processes and Movements in Karma or Works (Willing)**

**(1) Self-Consecration**

(A progressive re-direction of one's practical energies into disinterested pursuits of the highest good of all, into acts of service and dedication and self-offering to a nobler person. to the Divine Himself).

**(2) Obedience and Submission**

(The first steps in self-consecration and self-surrender are obedience and submission to the guide and the guru. External obedience slowly develops into inner loving surrender, which induces Divine Presence. With obedience and submission go rejection and elimination of self-assertions and revolts).

**(3) The Authentic Inner Guidance**

(Progressively the inner guidance becomes increasingly available and external standards tend to lose rigid holds over the Sadhak).

**(4) The Inward Poise in Works**

(Works are normally done in a sense of self-loss under a drive and absorption in external action. But they have to be done in self-possession and continuing sense of inner poise).

**(5) The Psychic Support**

(With psychic support and guidance self-consecration becomes a deep inner self-giving full of joy and love and a sense of wholeness).

**(6) The Emergence of the Divine Will**

(The Psychic evokes the Divine, and the Divine Presence, the Divine Will and the Divine Guidance tend to become a reality, bringing to the sadhak great clarity, certitude, joy, self-satisfaction and effectivity in will).

**(7) The Realization of the Divine Will**

(This realization is the culmination of the pursuit of Karma Yoga which makes divine works possible).

**(C) In Jnana or Knowledge (Knowing)**

**(1) The Integral Truth and Reality**

(The seeking for the Integral Truth and Reality, the Supreme, the One, which commands this multiplicity of manifestation, the entire apparent existence).

**(2) The Widening, the Deepening and the Heightening of Consciousness**

(The widening, the deepening and the heightening of our present consciousness and the discovery of other more competent instruments of knowledge to know and grasp the Integral Truth, which is Universal and Transcendent commanding all from the highest height of luminosity, unity and power).

**(3) The Purification of Consciousness**

(Purification and elimination of all ego-centricity, partiality, limitation, prejudices, preferences of mind's ideas, vital's desires, physical's habits, rigidities and obscurities enabling the consciousness to become clear, calm, free and devoted to Truth, which is vast and limitless).

**(4) The Practice of Concentration and Meditation**

(Training of the consciousness (of the mind and the vital and the physical) through the practice of concentration, meditation,

devoted study and thought into a status of increasing quietude, steady activity, silence, peacefulness, openness and receptivity to the transcendent truth).

**(5) The Sense-Perception and Rational Activity**

(Knowledge based on sense-perceptions is of the superficial qualities of sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, etc. Rational activity through inference and hypothesis builds up a body of analytical knowledge essentially relative in character valid within the relativities concerned, but lacking in integrality and unity and hence in clarity and certitude as to totality of life and existence).

**(6) The Growth of Knowledge**

(Increasing awareness of the deeper psychic individuality, cosmic universality and the Divine limitless Transcendence).

**(7) The Realisation of Integral Truth**

(Realisation of the Integral Truth comprehending the turth of the individuality, the truth of the universality and the truth of transcendence, in their full power and freedom and their commanding relation to a clearly appreciated and understood multiplicity of the entire apparent existence. Gnostic Consciousness is the ideal of the spiritual seeker of knowledge, the *Vijnana* of the Upanishads, the instrument of all-comprehending knowledge).

**(D) In Bhakti or Devotion (Feeling)**

**(1) Bhakti, Jnana and Karma (Love, Knowledge and Works)**

(Appreciation, admiration, adoration, respect, reverence and love for the Divine and things divine, for the true, the good, the sweet, the noble and the beautiful in all forms that naturally move a person. A cultivation of the same through music, poetry and painting and through acts of loving consecration. And all this to be founded in the knowledge that the Divine is truly the most adorable, being the most true, the most good, and the most beautiful. As knowledge makes love purer and clearer, so do works make it fuller. And love makes knowledge and works both much richer, more powerful and sweeter. Love is truly the crowning fulfilment of life and it lends a deeper significance and force to knowledge as well as works).

**(2) Love for the Divine**

(Seeking for the Divine, as the supreme object of love, a beloved and lover, in multitudinous relation of love, for the highest fulfilment of life in love).

**(3) Emotional Purification**

(Practice of emotional purification through a persistent rejection of anger, fear, hatred, jealousy, envy, rivalry, likes and dislikes, and other superficial divisive emotions and substitution of them by a pervasive joy and love and gratitude).

**(4) Love as Simple and Spontaneous Self-offering**

(Appreciation of the self-offering of the loving process as intrinsic joy and faith in response of love in its own time. A constant vigilances as to the impurity of a demand and insistence for response and the aspiration to make love a simple and spontaneous self-offering).

**(5) The Psychic Bhakti**

(Seeking for the deeper feelings of Bhakti, the psychic Bhakti, the self-satisfying out-pourings of love and gratitude and joy of the heart for the most lovable and adorable Divine Mother and the Supreme Divine).

**(6) The Experience of the Divine's Love**

(Experience of the compassion, love, protection; friendship and communion with the Divine and increasing reliance and contact and union with Him. Repetitions of ecstatic unions with the Divine and the growth of intimacy in the relationship).

**(7) The Realization of Divine's Love**

(The Realisation of the Divine's Love, His supreme beauty and charm and all-captivating attraction).

IV. THE HIGHER EXPERIENCES

(The occasional happy experiences of striking peace and quietude within, of delight in the heart, of a vast Presence above and all around and more clearly of the psychic being and the Divine and the various planes above the mind. Also those of detachment

from the body, the desiring vital and the thinking mind. And these and others representing influences and contacts from different planes of being in personality and existence occurring variously, as conscious waking experiences or as visions in waking or sleep or as dreams, modified in varying degrees by our normal personality).

### V. The Experiences of the Intermediate Zone (Between the Outer and the Inmost), of the Inner Mind, the Inner Vital and the Inner Physical

(The cxperiences are above and beyond the normal personality, which is a clear finite organisation dealing with the physical objects and mental processes, through the senses and the mind and reason's inferences and speculations. These experiences are of a larger mind and vital and physical. They involve the operations, in fact, of a universal mind; a universal vital and a universal physical, as in telepathy and telekinesis. But these are not truly higher experiences, though they are wider and larger no doubt).

### VI. Resistances and Revolts of Nature and the Interferences and Oppositions of other Egoistic Forces

(Our individual nature is a part of the universal nature which is ruled by forces, seeking their self-preservation and perpetuation of authority. A seeker of Yoga has to overcome these within himself as also their opposition from universal nature.

### VII. Conversion of Nature and the Emergence of the Psychic and the Spiritual Consciousness

(The nature being released from it fixations on external objects and being now turned inwards, the occasional emergence of the psychic being and the Divine Presence takes place).

### VIII. The Growth of Liberation

(The sense of inner spiritual freedom and mastery over the ordinary impulses begins to be clearly felt and it steadily expands).

### IX. The Transformation

(The descent of Divine Shakti, the opening of the chakra and the working of the Divine Grace become a vivid experience).

### X. The Three Perfections, Psychic, Spiritual and Supramental

(The harmonisation of the entire being around and under the Psychic Being, the delightful individual soul, next the harmonisation and integration around and under the universal Divine consciousness and lastly around and under the sun-bright integral Supramental Consciousness).

### XI. The Supramental Realisation

(The ascent to the Supermind, the sun-bright integral consciousness and its descent down to the physical cells and their transformation into the nature of the Supermind).

### XII. The Integral Transformation of Life

(The Integral Transformation of human living and the realisation of divine unity and harmony upon earth, through the emergence, at the first instance, of more and more persons of supramental realisation, the supermen, leading to the formation of a new race of gnostic beings on earth).

a more inward stance : like consciousness, like culture. In the ultimate analysis consciousness stands out as the one invariable, inner component. The imperative of man's awakened consciousness tends towards what Sri Aurobindo believes to be "the living aim of culture, the realization on earth of the Kingdom of "Heaven." Change of consciousness, the Aurobindean lever, lifts the race to new heights; but how many companions to lonely seer has is anybody's guess.

His mulennial hope is based, clearly, on an ontological overview. Consciousness a la Advaita is seen to be the very stuff of reality : . . . "The world is real precisely because it exists only in consciousness." The Energy which creates the world can be nothing else than a Will, and Will is only Consciousness employing itself to a work and a result."

"It is a conscious Energy one with Being that creates it." Again : . . . "The Being is integral and unifies many states of consciousness at a time; we also, manifesting the nature of the Brahman, should become integral and all-embracing." The Vedantic hypothesis granted, the conclusion, maybe not so traditional, follows. What is involved must evolve. A novum organum, could this be the wave of the future ?

What makes the Aurobindean meta-psychology so challenging and optimistic is its social stress. The application of a novel formula of self-determination, which he considers to be the secret of old India, enables him to recast our worldly prospects, prophetically, "here, in life, on earth and in the body." Brahmateja, soul force, about which he had written to his wife, acquires, in later years, in calm of mind, all passion spent a cosmic annotation and we hear him say : "All power is in the end one, really soul force." No one can fail to see how his tools have become more sensitive and, to that extent, perhaps elitist.

Inwardness is not inactivity. Really a strategic move, part of a higher ethics, and self-discovery, it shifts the level. The basic assumption, known to the mystics, is that man is a meeting-ground of levels of reality. His body a "mystery shop", the powers of all the worlds have their entrance here. Faced with the double crisis, of evolution and civilization. Sri Aurobindo proposes the perilous "passage"—a Vedic idea repeated in the Mysteries everywhere—from plane to plane. His stakes higher, Sri Aurobindo is light years ahead of the surface idealism of maimed utopians.

Of course, the problem and its solution are not on the same plane.

But what is a plane ? Simply, a plane is the poise or working out of a general relation which an Existence or Consciousness has created between itself and its powers of becoming. And since self-exceeding is inherent in nature or evolution, the traffic between the planes has to be opened once more. We have to find—or, if you like, found—our freedom in the context of the All-Consciousness, a totally self-aware and all-aware intelligence, which Sri Aurobindo elsewhere calls the Supermind. A supreme discovery, only so—by alchemy's key—can a reversal of consciousness take place in the fourth dimension where all is in ourselves, ourselves in all.

A Gay Science, consciousness is not incapable of world-play. The bliss-freedom of that one consciousness-force alone knowns how to reconcile conflicting values, notions and relations, outer no less than inner. This alone can create a culture in which the "perfected internal figures in a perfected external living."

The moral of such perfectionism is not hard to guess. "It is a spiritual, an inner freedom that alone can create a perfect human order." Unchanged, imperfect men cannot create a perfect society. The ideal of brotherhood, for instance, of which we hear every now and then, exists only in the soul. And this is the only reality-therapy for what Heidegger called essence-blindness.

## SUBJECTIVE

The Aurobindean approach, is frankly subjective and may seem to ignore history. But this would be a wrong view of his many-levelled thought that can illuminate the historical in terms of the eternal. Sri Aurobindo's *opercus* and arguments, in The Human Cycle and The Ideal of Human Unity, about the Myth of the State, Germany's false subjectivism, the failure of organized religions, the incompleteness of the epullient French slogans, are the searching insights of a visionary who was not innocent of the ways of the world. His understanding of world events and the history of ideas, hopelessly neglected, was striking. The yogi was a thinkers' thinker, even when he went beyond thought.

As he saw it, man is not just a rational or a religious animal. Both ideas suffer from almost identical limitations and lead—

through different routes—to a static, authoritarian system : only in one case it is mundane, in the other trans-mundane. Unlike the rational-religious Juggernauts spiritual culture will not make the mistake of forcing men to be free. That explains why it is so late in coming. Spiritual culture will insist on two conditions, not easy to fulfil, paripassu. First, there must be awakened individuals who have remade themselves in the image of the truth and are able to pass on its idea-force to the many. Secondly, there has to be a mass or group able and willing to fulfil the inexorable conditions of transcendence or the higher living. The awakened individual, one-with-all, will not live for either the collective or the individual ego, neither for the State nor for society. Humanity and community are but transient roles in the self's theatre. In the inner dialectics a mass movement is not a must. In any case, the individual is more of a free moral agent than the group.

The modern emphasis on a planned society has its place in the totality of human aspiration. But as an end in itself, and entirely dominated by material demands and manipulation, it is, as we know it too well, not without danger. So many gods have failed or are failing : so many hopes that soon fade into drab realities and passions that crumble to ashes even while they blaze. No social machinery or revolutionary programme, however well-intentioned, can cut life and mind into perfection. It is time to bury the myth.

Provided the human resources of goodwill, intelligence and imagination have not run out, it is not unlikely that in the One World the like-minded will come together in a common pursuit of the highest. East or West, such workshops of the future are not wanting. At least there is an air of expectation. Whitehead had spoken of a civilization of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo has given that idea a characteristic turn, hinted at a radical, epiphanic sociology in terms of the most ancient psychology : "A greater consciousness means a greater life." The more conscious the more cultured such is the thrust of his live, dangerous thought. It is easier to take his name than his challenge.

"The heroic for the earth too hard," the Earthly Paradise will not be an easy or a painless process. But it is the difficult thing that needs to be done. *Solvitur ambulando.* Else the cure will be worse than the crisis. The coming civilization will not set out to create a new type imperfect, superior mental being—least of all

heartless technocrats or the pettifogging politicians—but beings of another order, wise and self-fulfilled. Wisdom is more important than knowledge. The outward, ordinary mind cannot foresee, much less organize, the supramental shape of things to come. The mind is a passage and an instrument, not the artist of the epiphany. In the new life much that is normal to our ways of seeing and doing will doubtless disappear. War, injustice, commercialism, uglification, meaninglessness. Such is the metaphysic of hope.

## REVOLUTION

Poised on the freedom of the heights of the being, the play of evolved culture and consciousness will be a constant miracle, a complete manifestation, the last of things for which the first was made. As Eusebius Pamphllius had said, the first in Intention, the last in Execution, is the Paradise of mature, Spiritual Intelligence. An evolution in the Knowledge will be more vivid, beautiful and glorious than any evolution in the Ignorance can hope to be. Here is the Aurobindean cultural revolution in terms of a change of consciousness. Part of the collective yoga of mankind, it is this that will one day turn the child soul into "an adult in the divine culture."

To the unity of being and unity of culture Sri Aurobindo has given a vigour and a value that may well inspire a new style of civilization. Who can deny its appeal ? But who will be its evangelists ? In his song of promise he has given the orthodox idea of salvation and our ascending fate a surprising new look post-modern : "Hid in ourselves the key of perfect change." Never was Sri Aurobindo more relevant than when he appeared to be remote.

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## FROM AUROBINDO. . . TO TAMRA PATRA

J.B. KRIPALANI

Our Government has decided to honour the freedom fighters. Strangely enough they are also called—or call themselves—as political sufferers !

Anybody who has suffered six months imprisonment came in this class. It was proposed to give each one of them a Tamra Patra, in recognition of his sufferings in jail and his contribution to the freedom fight. They were either to come to Delhi or go to the State Capitals to receive their Tamra Patra. It is said that some nine hundred of these brave soldiers in the freedom fight came to Delhi to receive their award. The number of those who received it in the State Capitals is not known. Nobody seems to have any knowledge as to how the selection of the recipients of the honour was made and by whom. Not even the all-knowing editor of the *March of the Nation*, Piloo Mody, has any knowledge of it.

### INSULT

It is said that one of the invitees was Shankar Rao Deo, the former General Secretary of the Indian National Congress, when it was truly national and not, as it is now, a mere political party. He was offered a second class fare to and fro and Rs. 15 as allowance for the day he would be requested to be in Delhi. For Rs. 15 per day he could have been accommodated only in a *Dhaba*. The Government hotels would not charge less than Rs. 75 per day.

He seems to have rejected the Government's offer !

It is said that in Delhi, there was much to be desired in the reception of the patriots selected for the honour. Their food and housing arrangements were highly unsatisfactory. They were not given their plaques by the Prime Minister. Only a few were given the same by her and the rest were handed over to group leaders to be distributed. It is true that the Prime Minister of India is a busy person, and could not perhaps find time to personally do the necessary presentation. But in that event, our constitution has provided the person of our Rashtrapati, who can perform such ceremonies. He has only formal and ceremonial functions to perform, and this was a ceremonial function.

It is said that the invitees were taken round Delhi; some of them had never been here. They, it is said, were not much impressed to see that all the splendour and glamour of the old imperial capital had been retained. They were particularly pained to see that the old Viceregal Palace had only changed its name but all the imperial pomp and paraphernalia had remained infact, for the accommodation maybe of a pre-eminent citizen in a democratic India, but whose functions are not those of the autocrat Viceroy, who actually did govern. It is said that in Diwane Am at the Red Fort function, where the Rashtrapati presided the freedom fighters were given seats behind the administrators, their families and invited friends. The latter were also the first to pounce upon the refreshments provided for the occasion. Similar was the case in Lucknow. All in all, it was a bad and sad show. It lacked the solemnly, the dignity and the finesse, which must mark such auspicious occasions. It seemed to have been organised by persons who had scant respect for the invited guests and in the contribution they had made in the freedom fight. It is a pity that after twenty-five years of independence our rulers have not learn to organise properly the celebration of an auspicious and, if one may say so, a sacred occasion.

## BANDE MATARAM

This, the Silver Jubilee year, also happens to be the centenary year of the birth of our great patriot and yogi, Sri Aurobindo. He was born a century back on the 15th August, our independence day. Writing about this coincidence, he has said :

"To me personally it must naturally be gratifying that this date which was notable only for me because it was my own birthday, celebrated annually by those who have accepted my gospel of life, should have acquired this vast significance. As a mystic, I take this identification not as a coincident or fortuitous accident, but as a sanction and seal of Divine Power, which guides my steps on the work with which I began my life."

Let us now see the kind of nation, for whose freedom Sri Aurobindo worked in the beginning of his public life. It is vividly given in our national anthem, Bandemataram. It sings :

Mother, I bow to thee !
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Cool with thy winds of delight,
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
Mother free. . . .
Who hath said thou art weak in thy lands,
When the swords flash out in twice seventy million hands,
And seventy million voices roar
Thy dreadful name from shore to shore ?
With many strengths who art mighty and strong,
To thee I call, Mother and Lord !
Thou who savest, arise and save !
To her I cry who ever her foemen drave
Back from plain and sea,
And shook herself free.
Thou art wisdom, thou art law,
Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,
Thou the love Divine, the awe,
In our hearts that conquers death.
Thine the beauty, thine the charm,
Every image made Divine
In our temples is but thine.
Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen,
With thy hands that strike and thy swords of sheer,
Thou art Lakshmi lotus-throned.
And the Muse a hundred-toned.

Pure and perfect without peer,
Mother, lend thine ear. . . .
Mother sweet, I bow to thee,
Mother great and free !

(Translation by *Aurobindo*)

## MUSLIMS

It is a pity that on account of the iconoclastic zeal of our Muslim countrymen the names of the goddesses Durga, terrible to the wicked and merciful Mother to her righteous children. Lakshmi, the goddess of plenty, and Saraswati, the goddess of learning and the muse, have been dropped. These goddesses are virtues personified, virtues which every nation may treasure ! Ancient India not only personified virtues but also great and beneficent natural objects. Ganga is Ganga Maiya, the Himalayas are the holy Himalayas, where the Rishis reside !

This was the image of our India for Aurobindo and many others. It was not the lands, mountains, rivers, valleys that was India but she was the loving, the benevolent and the mighty Mother. She was in chains. She was degraded, humiliated and starved in her own land by the foreigner. "There was none so poor as would do her reverence. She had to be freed not only for herself, for her material and intellectual advance, but for the service of humanity, for its spiritual guidance. He says : "I have always held and said that India was rising not to serve her material interests, only to achieve extension, greatness, power and prosperity, though these too she must not neglect, and certainly not like others to acquire dominion over other people, but to live also for God and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race."

## A HOLY YAJNA

What was then the kind of service that Mother India needed ? According to Aurobindo's idea the service of the Mother was a holy 'Yajna'. He says : "the work of national emancipation is a great and holy Yajna. Liberty is the fruit we seek. From the sacrifice (Yajna), we seek, and the Motherland, the Goddess to whom we offer it, into the sacred fires of the seven leaping tongues

of the fire of the Yajna, we must offer all that we are and all that we have, feeding the fire even with our blood and lives and happiness of our nearest and dearest for the Motherland is the goddess who loves not a maimed and imperfect sacrifice, and freedom was never won from the grudging gods by a grudging giver."

Again says Aurobindo : "If any reservation mars the completeness of our self-abandonment, if any bargaining abridges the fullness of the sacrifice, if any doubts mars the strength of our faiths and enthusiasm, if any thought of self-pollutes the sanctity of our love, then the Mother will not be satisfied and will continue withhold." (Sacrifice is a poor translation of 'Yajna'. Yajna is all joy. But there is an element of sorrow and pain in the word sacrifice. It also seems to demand a return. Yajna is a sacrament, complete in itself. It needs and expect no return.)

This is what the prophet, poet and seer of Indian independence felt, thought, wrote and said. This is what he demanded of those who chose to serve the Mother. We may not expect from the patriot of today, after twenty-five years of independence, all that Aurobindo asked for and expected. But, I think it was a sacrilege to mar the sacred memory of the services rendered by freedom-fighters to give them tokens of their services, after a quarter century of neglect. The sweet memories of the Yajna in which they had the honour to participate were reward enough for them. I wish this item of the celebrations in connection with the Silver Jubilee had never been thought of, more particularly when it was done in such a manner.

After all, our sufferings were nothing as compared to what nations have undergone, suffered, and are suffering, for their national freedom and independence ! But such programmes can only be conceived by a coterie of philistines, who now happen to rule the country. I think it is time that our people forget the sacrifices that the earlier generation made for the freedom of the country. For those of them who are still living, the happy memories of the sufferings of those days are as sacred as the memories of the wounds of the soldiers received in fighting for the freedom of the land of their birth, and land they love.

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# SRI AUROBINDO AS A WORLD PHILOSOPHER

INDRA SEN

As the world tends to become a self-conscious unity and evolves a life of its own in commerce, science, literature and social relations, the question of a world philosophy becomes more and more insistent and urgent. But what do we really mean by world philosophy ? Has philosophy not always been universal ? Undoubtedly, philosophy has always, primarily, dealt with what are called the persistent problems of life and existence and whether it has been ancient Greece, ancient India, ancient China or modern Europe the fundamental problems have always been the same. And that being so, the answers offered must have a universal validity. Just as the subject-matter of Physics is universal, so are its laws, whether of falling bodies or of reflection or refraction. In the same manner, the philosopher in Greece or India or China or modern Europe has reflected on the same life and existence and sought to know and explain them, and their answers as representations of truth must have a universal validity. This is borne out by the experience of the students of one country seeking to understand the philosophy of another country or of one cultural epoch trying to understand that of another cultural epoch. Indian students and scholars are able to appreciate and benefit from the study of Greek philosophers and the Western students, even when some difficulty is experienced, are able to appreciate and benefit from the thought of India and China.

And yet the philosophies of Greece, India, China and modern

will have a world philosophy, no doubt, but it will reflect broadly one quality of experience as it were. World philosophy should, therefore, not mean the suppresion of the individual characteristic standpoints of cultures and persons, but the pursuit of the same under the explicit awareness of the full extension and variety of human experience and the essential unity of human nature and ultimate reality. This is increasingly becoming a fact today and, therefore, philosophy too naturally tends to become universal in a sense it has not been before.

However, philosophy has a special difficulty in acquiring this character. Science deals with physical phenomena and its judgements admit of an easier verification. In other words, the experience, which science deals with, is relatively simple and it can be externally checked up. This facilitates the achievement of universality in this sphere. Besides, practical utility is an added help to its pursuit and verification. Thus, Science tends to be universal in practice as a matter of course. Its subject-matter as well as methods, which are determined by it, command an easier agreement.

But with philosophy the case is different. Its subject-matter is the entire human experience, whose full extent and depth cannot be stated with definiteness. The experience of external physical phenomena, with which science is concerned, the experience of the rational process, the moral experience, the aesthetic experience, and the religious and spiritual experience are some of the forms and qualities of experience known and recognised so far. And among some of these there are further grades and differences. Under the spiritual, for example, Sri Aurobindo identifies many distinct experiences of which he mentions the Supramental as of special philosophical significance, since he affirms that, in the light of it, some of the most difficult and insoluble problems of philosophy appear simple and intelligible. If human experience as a whole possesses a unity, as it must, then it should be possible to correlate and integrate all these different forms, qualities and grades of experiences. And if such a conspectus were evolved world philosophy would discover its first promise and it will then tend to become a dynamic pursuit of the human spirit. Today, we have many philosophies, even within the same country and cultural life, and we cannot easily relate them to each other and place them rightly in life, since we have no conception of the integral

experience of man. Given a conception of the integral experience, the scientific, moral, aesthetic, religious and spiritual experiences of all grades could be seen in that totality and therefore understood. And given this comprehensive idea of human experience even when a philosopher builds up more directly on the basis of rational experience and its implications, would evidently try to correlate it with the other aspects of it. That will evidently discourage the development of exclusive philosophies, which tend to become unrelatable.

We would repeat, that the first promise, which can make world philosophy possible, is the conception of integral experience of man, its manifold aspects and its possibilities. This alone can prevent the growth of exclusive and unrelatable philosophies. In our attempt to philosophise on a consciously world basis and evolve world philosophies, whereas we might try to understand and sympathise with the different past philosophies of the world and attempt to synthesise them, the most important essential fact, which will give world philosophy the primary base on which to stand, comparable to the physical reality of Physics, is a sense, feeling and comprehension of this integral experience. Since this is vast and varied, it will afford all freedom to specific talent and approach of nations and individuals. Given this concept of integral experience, as the bed-rock of human nature and world life, the varied philosophies will not become exclusive. They will tend to appear as distinctive facets or lines of world thought and philosophy. Further, since such experience will virtually be infinite, philosophies will find a field of endless creativity opened out to them. In the past philosophy has often tended to be a matter of rational experience and that has naturally been determined by the relative dominance of reason in the normal human personality and, therefore, philosophies had to revolve within the limited premises of rational thought and expression. Hence, we have a feeling of relative uncreativity of philosophy. A clear recognition and inquiry regarding the character and content of integral experience is thus the first issue of the problem of world philosophy and this given philosophy will naturally tend to become world philosophy and incidentally acquire unlimited prospects of creativity.

So far we have primarily considered the concept of world philosophy as such, its inevitable growth in the present circumstances of the life of humanity and the concept of the integral

experience of man as the first premise for a fruitful and continuous growth of world philosophy. However, world philosophy, if it is to get properly started and become a trend and a living tradition, must, at the first instance, be born in the mind and soul of a particular philosopher. And we believe that world philosophy has already been born, that it has taken a start and is fast becoming a trend and that the philosopher, in whose mind and soul it has taken birth and who has given it a start is Sri Aurobindo. That must evidently be a great prospect for philosophy, but how are we to recognise it.

To be able to recognise Sri Aurobindo as one who has given today a model of world philosophy or as world philosopher, we will have to look into his personality and consider his philosophy. So far as the growth of his personality is concerned he has had the best of Western education in England since boyhood. He studied Latin and Greek, immersed himself deeply in the classics and sought to understand and appreciate modern European life and culture. He thus became abundantly equipped with the cultural life of the West. He had also had a strong instinct for spiritual life and its possibilities. Thus in the make-up of his personality the East and the West had entered into an intimate combination. Further, quite in the last decade of the last century he had foreseen that great changes were going to come upon humanity and he had personally felt called upon to prepare himself to meet them. The essential change, he foresaw, was that of a radical revaluation of values, of a great crisis of our civilisation and the birth of a new one, or the crash of materialism and the drawn of the intrinsic values of the Spirit. The last few decades have already witnessed the complete repudiation of the nineteenth century materialism and the relative prevalence of dynamic energism as explanation of nature and history. There has also been a steady growth of the psychological view in life and literature. But Sri Aurobindo had seen the necessity of the birth of the spiritual stand-point out of the crises precipitated by the preponderance of materialism. However, the spiritual standpoint of his conception was not exclusive of life and world but inclusive of it. The spiritual was, in fact, for him a term of evolutionary progression to appear necessarily in succession to the mental, which was the present general term of human living. To explore and realise the spiritual, had therefore, become to him the call of

humanity and the one proper solution of the ills that attended its civilisation. A time came when this call became overwhelming and unresistible to him and he withdrew from active life and gave himself up entirely to explore the profundities of his soul. This exploration yielded to him a unique experience, the experience of all-oneness, rich and varied integrality, of the many-in-one, of the Supramental consciousness. And this experience, by virtue of its supreme vividness and reality, became his most original motive of life and experience and the same has shown in his hands a most wonderful reconciling power in handling different kinds of human experiences. An integral experience, an integral personality and integral Reality were the three great fruits of his unique experience and when, after prolonged inner exploration and growth, they had been achieved in full maturity, he proceeded to realise them in wider life through his practical spiritual work. His thought has been built upon the same basic concepts; it shows that through the comprehensive scheme of these ideas, different views, divergent and contradictory, could be reconciled and appreciated as complementary.

Among the three basic concepts mentioned above, that of integral personality is methodologically the first. On it depends that of integral experience and on that the knowledge of integral Reality. Sri Aurobindo had sought to know the integral personality and, having known it to his best satisfaction, he has given an elaborate man of its main parts and planes of experience. These are the body, life, mind and soul. Each one of them has a characteristic plane of experience, carrying with it its own system of values. Alternatively, we talk of the planes of the conscious, the sub-conscious and the Super-conscious. The conscious is the plane of normal experience, involving a self set against a not-self and the activity of rational thought. The sub-conscious is chiefly the realm of unco-ordinated egoistic impulses, which is described by Freud and Jung as 'choatic'. The Super-conscious is marked by an essential wholeness. Sri Aurobindo distinguishes many successive levels in it and assigns to them progressive degrees of integration, the Supermind being the one possessing perfect integrality.

Body, Life, Mind and Soul or Spirit are the four main parts of human personality or the conscious, the sub-conscious and the Super-conscious are the three main dimensions of its conscious existence. The individual, the universal and the transcendental are

further the three philosophical terms, applicable to human personality as well as the total reality, which Sri Aurobindo employs to explain them. Human personality has an individual part, a universal part and a transcendental part. The conscious in personality is the normal 'ego' individuality. The subliminal in man, is an additional dimension, through which the individual participates in the universal and gives him a direct experience of it. The Super-conscious is the transcendental in man.

Now, if we had a clear appreciation of the distinctive experiences of these different parts and planes of human personality and then tried to consider the different philosophies of nations and individuals, we could arrive at some most enlightening clarities. For example, the modern philosophy of Europe is essentially a "thinking consideration of things." It relies on reason for a view of Reality. Evidently, the nature of the rational process, its relation to language and the possibility of an unconscious action of instinct on reason will qualify Reality as known through it. Further, it will be a representative knowledge of Reality, not direct experience of it. Such philosophy will evidently be an "adventure of ideas."

If we are able to recognise that the spirit has an instrumentation of knowledge of its own and also admit that philosophy essentially seeks a knowledge of its own Reality or the whole existence, then we will find it relatively easy to admit and differentiate between philosophies that are mental and rational and those that are primarily based on spiritual perceptions of Reality. Indian philosophies, for the most part, have a foundational spiritual experience. Reason plays a secondary role in substantiating it, through evidence, argument and proper exposition. The spiritual experience of Nirvana, of the absolute cessation of the flux of mental process, is foundational to Buddhist philosophy. The vast body of this thought is the elaboration of reason intended to satisfy and convince the common mind of man of the truth and applications of Nirvanic experience. Similarly, the experience of the sole and exclusive reality of the Brahman is the central truth of Shankar's Adwaitism and the vast structure of thought of the system is the work of logical reason.

If we identify ourselves too exclusively with the standpoint of modern western philosophy, we will very naturally feel inclined to declare Indian philosophy as almost no philosophy. We will find,

them in terms of the planes of personality and experience involved is a task for the future. But Sri Aurobindo has given this approach and demonstrated its value in a substantial degree so as to open up a complete possibility of a real understanding and appreciation among all the different adventures and pursuit of philosophy and of their co-operation in a comprehensive adventure of integral philosophy.

The attempt to reconcile philosophies by relating them to the planes of experience and the parts of personality that they seem to be connected with is bound to strike as a subjectivist approach, undermining the objectivity of knowledge that philosophy really seeks and affirms. On the face of it, the objection would appear to be strong and well-founded. But a critical examination of the matter will show that our experience really reveals different orders of objectivity. Sense-experience, rational consideration and spiritual experience all possess objectivity and necessity of their own, so that a reference to subjective planes of experience is itself an evidence of the correlative objectivity that they carry. Hence, this approach does not undermine the objectivity of philosophy, but, in fact, offers a convenient methodology for the determination of the same.

Religion has been even a more difficult field for mutual reconciliation, since here each positive form of it claims an absoluteness for its perceptions of the truth. The philosophy of religion has now normally established this much that each religion consists of two parts, one the institutional and ceremonial and the other experiential. The former is, further, instrumental to the latter. Thus, the experiential in a religion is its true essence. Now, Sri Aurobindo points out that each religion opens out to its followers the way to experience. God, Trurh or Reality in one specific way, it offers primarily one type of perception and contact with them. In the integral experience of Reality they all can become valuable contributions and hence to the seekers of such experience each religion would be a unique prospect of enrichment. Thus, he conceives of a religion of integral spiritual living, in which all positive religions become unique contributions and their different ceremonials as possible means to the enjoyment of their particular experiences. It is pretty understandable that once the essential experiential element of religions comes to be rightly recognised and the externals given their due place, then the

uniqueness of the contacts of Reality that they present will come to be cherished more commonly. And when that happens religion will tend to become a way of integral spiritual living.

If we consider different positive religions, we find in them characteristic perceptions of God and Reality. And then the relations of man to God too are characteristically different in each. In some the approach is predominantly of knowledge, in some of devotion and in some of service and works. All these circumstances go to the making of a characteristic religious experience and each religion has a unique quality of such experience to offer. Evidently a seeker of the integral experience of Godhead will cherish them all and seek them by all the means that they can be had. This is certainly a most happy and wonderfully reconciling view of the different religions that mankind possesses and has possessed.

A similar reconciliation of the different cultures of man too is possible. Each culture is a characteristic expression of the total life of a people and represents a pattern of the cultivation of personality. The Greeks, for example, had sought a cultivation of life under the guidance of the ideals of truth, beauty and goodness. They had represented a high standard of mental culture. Modern Europe has, on the other hand, primarily sought an organisation life, of its wants and their satisfactions, through science and technology. This has resulted in a raising of the general standard of living. Ancient Indian culture had made Spirit as its chief interest and shaped itself primarily on that basis. Evidently these three great cultures of the world had sought a distinct part of human personality, developed it specially and achieved a special excellence in it. The Greeks, the mind, modern Europe the body and life and ancient India the Spirit. Surely in a conception of Integral culture of man they all have a unique contribution to make and those who seek the most perfect expression of cultural life will heartily cherish them all. Similarly, it can be shown that each culture that man has evolved has had some distinctive excellence in it, which must constitute a contribution to the total culture of man. Here the comprehending vision of Sri Aurobindo creates a sound philosophical basis for world culture, world life and therefore world philosophy.

So far we have primarily shown how Sri Aurobindo, by virtue of his education, endowment and interest was, as it were, meant

consciously to face the world situation in these times and offer a world philosophy. Further, we have shown how through his discovery of the quality of integral experience, called by him the Supermind, he was led on to his conceptions of integral personality and integral culture and how these have shown a way of rapprochement and understanding among the philosophies, religions and cultures of the world. Virtually under the impact of his idea of integrality different philosophies, religions and cultures tend to appear as parts of a whole, without which they cannot be conceived as fully real.

But a world philosophy must not merely reconcile and create a unity. A sense and meaning of whole life and understanding and sympathy with all its varied strands is necessary, but this is not sufficient. In dynamic existence it must also provide conditions for a continued growth and enrichment of them all. If world philosophy is to mean uniformity in thought and perception, then it will impoverish creativity. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, fortunately, through the same concepts of integral experience, integral personality and integral Reality, is not only able to provide for but rather encourage distinctive and unique seekings and developments, since it is through a greater veriety that a richer and fuller unity is achieved. Unity involves variety of content and in a creative existence unity must be an evolving unity, that is to say, it must progressively enrich itself. Thus if we are aware of the true character of Reality and of the integral scope of personality and experience philosophy and culture can always be creative. It is only when we lose that awareness or voluntarily subject ourselves to some mechanical limitations that they become uncreative.

We have referred to ancient India, ancient China, ancient Greece and modern Europe as the great homes of philosophical creations. Each one of them has contributed a unique quality, which is a permanent asset for world philosophy. But each one of them has also its own limitations. If considered in relation to the integral thought of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, they seem to acquire the sense of a part rightly seen in relation to the whole and in fact of a functioning and a growing part in a living whole. One is able to see what is right and true in each as also what its future trends must be if it is to fulfil itself.

If we take Indian philosophy first, we can say that after Shankara, Ramanuja, Vallabha and Madhava, the Great Acharyas

of Vedanta philosophy Sri Aurobindo once again presents an original whole system of Vedanta. Indian philosophy after several centuries of more or less uncreative existence, received a rejuvenation at his hands. And the new system boldly confronts the whole modern world and its complex and vast experience and offers an explanation of it all. The world is heartily accepted by it, as in fact the field of the evolving manifestation of the Brahman. Science and technology as the means of the organisation of external life are perfectly valid pursuits and means. But they are only means. The end is the unfoldment of the spirit and the spirit here is a term of evolution, which is to follow up mind, as the mind had done in its turn life and matter, as a general quality of human existence. The individual too is now no longer a complete integer and his exclusive salvation is longer the goal. The universal is an essential aspect of it and if the race does not progress, the individual remains essentially imperfect. Perfection of the race is the goal and individual liberation a means in the process. Social life of man thus receives the much needed philosophical justification. Renunciation, Karma, Rebirth all undergo an interesting modification. Indian philosophy thus becomes fresh and creative, confident of itself *vis-a-vis* the present-day world and entirely hopeful of a future greater than her past. It also becomes conscious of its world context. It recognises the problems that confront the world as a whole. It is appreciative of the other approaches to these problems, but with faith in its own characteristic approach it seeks to offer its unique solutions of them.

The Western philosophy in the light of the integral thought of Sri Aurobindo would evidently appear in a form of its own. Its dominant notes of rationalism and empiricism acquire a fresh justification and extension of meaning. Mysticism in the East and West has usually decried reason. But Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, while being spiritualist, upholds reason strongly. It is, to it, for the present evolutionary stage of man an indispensable instrument of organisation and action. Without it we cannot organise our external situation nor act in it an orderly manner. Reason arranges and organises our ideas and gives them a systematic form and that means effective communication, understanding and action in life. But it works upon the data of superficial qualities of things supplied to it by the senses and proceeds laboriously piecemeal trying to construct inferential knowledge of facts beyond the

superficial qualities. It has no direct access to essences of them or their true nature.

This is evidently a justification of reason as well as a demonstration of the limitation of it and an indication of other instruments of knowledge, which would make rapprochement of Western philosophy with certain other philosophies easier and also show it a possible line for its own extension.

Empiricism receives, surprisingly enough, even a stronger support from Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is fundamentally determined by the yogic approach. Says he in one context "our way of knowing must be appropriate to that which is to be known."[1] That means that our senses and reason are adapted to the knowledge of the external world of finite things. But if we wish to know the inner truths of Infinite Existence then obviously other instruments of knowledge are called for and these must be developed and cultivated so that we may be able to have a direct experience of ultimate realities. God, soul and immortality must thus become objects of empirical knowledge. Direct experience is, therefore, the only satisfactory way of knowledge, but this experience is not limited to the objects of senses only. There are faculties of knowledge in man to which ultimate realities too can be objects of direct experience. The empirical habit of mind of the West and science that has inculcated it thus become a great asset, since in their extension lies the true solution of the problems of existence.

On the positive side Sri Aurobindo's philosophy would suggest to the Western philosophy the need for the recognition of the fact of the Spirit besides that of mind and a full utilisation of it in a view of personality and existence. If that is done, it can give to Western philosophy its orientation of integral experience and also enable it to discover the prospect of continuous growth and increasing contribution of its unique quality to world philosophy.

The Chinese philosophy has been characteristically marked by social or a sociological approach to problems of life and existence. 'Man in Society' is the fact that interested the Chinese mind most and this constituted an abiding basis of their thought and reflection. Evidently 'man in society' is a great and obvious truth of life and this must stand as a permanent contribution of Chinese thought to world philosophy. Now, this truth receives an interesting philosophical support in Sri Aurobindo's system. The

particular is an individuation and instrumentation of the universal. It lives in and through the universal. Therefore, the individual man can never cut himself off from society. He is determined by the race and society, evolutionally and culturally, and he owes a duty to them, because it is through him that they grow and advance in their nature and character. But growth means transcendence, achievement of what is beyond and above the actual. Therefore, the individual and the universal involve also the transcendental. This is an interesting elucidation and elaboration of the essential standpoint of Chinese thought. But the full impact of the integral thought could invite and urge Chinese philosophy to pursue these three terms in their implications and elaborations as far as possible. And that will open out to it a foundation of ultimate reality, which could offer to Chinese thought an indefinite field of creation in its own line and approach. And that would evidently be a continuing contribution of its own quality to world philosophy. Thus, the integral thought of Sri Aurobindo accepts and values Chinese thought and also shows how it can continuingly make a unique contribution to world thought and culture.

We have been concerned above with the issue of world philosophy and we have affirmed that as the world tends to become one, through the co-operation of a variety of factors and forces, it evidently becomes conscious of itself as a unity. The world, as a whole, then tends to become the object of reflection and a world philosophy must naturally come into being. But world philosophy, if it is not merely to be an eclectic system of different philosophies, must have an essential perception and unity of its own. This perception and unity, we have felt persuaded to affirm, must be of integral personality and integral experience. That is to say, an appreciation of all the different parts of personality and their characteristic experiences or a full view of the whole personality is a pre-requisite of world philosophy. An individual with such a rich endowment of personality and experience would be the right person to appreciate world philosophy and create it. This type of personality will probably become more and more a common phenomena. And proportionately would philosophy too become a living force and trend.

Just now world philosophy is emerging in our mental horizon as a problem and we inquire into its conditions and possibilities. We hardly look for a representative of it, since we feel that it is

yet too soon to expect one. But we have been happy to discover in Sri Aurobindo a real progenitor of world philosophy. His education and natural endowment seemed to give him wide appreciation of different philosophies and ways and views of life and existence. Then his deep interest in integrality, whether in regard to personality or experience or reality leading to the discovery of the true quality of integral experience called by him supermind, enabled him to create such a broad-based philosophy as worthily presents the model of a world philosophy. This philosophy not only reconciles and explains different continental and racial philosophies, but gives them the perspective of a unity and affords to each an assured room for richer growth in its own characteristic line for the future. A world philosophy should, evidently, at the first instance, supply a sense of the whole, which gives to each part a better feeling of its due place as also a wider room for future existence. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, we believe, does that for all philosophies and it seems to mark a happy inauguration of the era of world philosophy.

## Note and Reference

1. The Life Divine (American edition), p. 293.

# 80

## SRI AUROBINDO, MINSTREL OF FAITH AND LOVE

DILIP KUMAR ROY

Only the Eternal's strength in us can dare
To attempt the immense adventure of the climb
And sacrifice of all we cherish here.

(SAVITRI, II.12)

Will Durant has written in his great book *The Story of Civilization* that Faith and Reason have been at war from the dawn of civilization, with victory changing hands alternately between the to eternal antagonists, till today science founded on reason seems to have driven faith to the wall. But the man of faith has by no means lost heart yet and sings on, contending that appearance is not always the ultimate reality. So while the primitive man's animistic credo has been supplanted by the verdict of the civilized intellectual, the sages and saints, seers and prophets, do still align themselves with minstrels of faith, demonstrating with their radiant lives that we walk with God not guided by the rushlights of reason but by the starshine of faith, and that is why the denial of the materialist has not finally prevailed against the certitude of the God-rapt illuminate. Goethe was one of the elect who seized this when he sang :

*Lecture delivered under the auspices of Poona University.

Sagt es niemand, nur den Weisen,
Denn die Menge gleich verhonet :
Das Lebend'ge will ich preisen
Das nach Flammentod sich sehnet.

If tell you must, tell the wise alone who know,
For the others will but call it folly, not faith :
"I only worship the great souls who glow
To hail the fire as kin, defying death."

This is not rhetoric : it is truth, attested by the glowing lives of saints and martyrs who sacrifice everything to make the cause live. Sri Aurobindo has proclaimed this eternal truth in *Savitri.*

But this is the gospel not of the practical reasoning intellect which can see men die but not God being reborn like the Phoenix rising from the cinders of its funeral pyre. For that one must win to the third eye of Vision—the *divyacaksu* which Krishna gave to Arjuna so he might behold the Universe in His *visvarupa.*

But alas, in this age of the triumphal pageant of Science and Techonology the sages and saints who thrill in the glory of the "Great Sun-resplendent Being overarching darkling of life,"[1] are at a disadvantage because they belong to a microscopic minority who have *seen* and as such can be easily outvoted by the vast majority who have *not seen.*

When Sri Aurobindo first initiated me in his Yoga of self-surrender he enjoined me to be lessoned in humility and cultivate the aspiration for faith first and last and in the middle. I was at a loss because though I had a genuine reverence for the man of God, I revered, withal, the intellectual--the utterly honest materialist, the man of science, who hails today so robustly the torch of Reason as the one and only reliable pathfinder in the labyrinth of life. So I went on questioning with my doubting mind the validity of what he termed the findings of the "psychic being." In other words (I asked) could a stable faith be possibly based on the hearsay evidence of saints, an acceptance be recommended *before* experience ?[2]

He wrote back :

"First of all, faith does not depend upon experience, it is

something that is there before experience. When one starts the Yoga, it is not usually on the strength of experience, but on the strength of faith. And it is so not only in yoga and the spiritual life, but in ordinary life also. All men of action, discoverers, inventors, creators of knowledge proceed by faith and, until the proof is made or the thing done, they go on in spite of disappointment, failure, disproof, denial,—because of something in them that tells them that this is the truth, the thing that must be followed and done. Sri Ramakrishna even went so far as to say, when asked whether blind faith was not wrong, that blind faith was the only kind to have, for faith is either blind or it is not faith but something else : reasoned inference, proved conviction or ascertained knowledge."

His admonition startled me, the more so as it recalled to my mind an epistle of Paul in which he had averred : "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." I was reminded also of a simile I had heard somewhere, to the effect that faith is like the first roseflush in the sky before the down promising the advent of the sun. But Sri Aurobindo's pronouncement was more inspiring :

"Faith is the soul's witness to something not yet manifested, achieved or realised, but which yet the Knower within us, even in the absence of all indications, feels to be true or supremely worth following or achieving . . . who is there that practised the Yoga and had not his periods, long periods of disappointment and failure and disbelief and darkness ? But there is something that sustains him and goes on inspite of himself, because it feels that what it followed after was yet true, and it more than feels, it *knows.* The fundamental faith in yoga is this, inherent in the soul, that the Divine exists and the Divine is the one thing to be followed after—nothing else in life is worth having in comparison with that."[3]

Apropos, I sent upto him a letter from a friend who chided me for turning to Yoga accepting the lead of blind faith which "right reason" has repudiated today, the world over, "hook, line and sinker."

Gurudev wrote back at once :

"He urbraids you for losing your reason in blind faith. But what is his own opinion of things except a reasoned faith? You believe according to your faith which is quite natural, he believes according to his own opinion which is natural also but no better so far as the likelihood of getting at the true truth of things is in question. His opinion is according to his reason? But so are the opinions of his political opponents according to their reason, yet they affirm the very opposite idea to his. How is reasoning to show which is right? The opposite parties can argue till they are blue in the face—they won't be anywhere nearer a decision. In the end, he prevails who has greater force or whom the trend of things favours. But who can look at the world as it is and say that the trend of things is always (or ever) according to *right reason*—whatever this thing called right reason may be? As a matter or fact there is no universal infallible reason which can decide and be the umpire between conflicting opinions, there is only my reason, your reason, X's reason, Y's reason, multiplied upto the discordant innumerable."[4]

This letter has been acclaimed by hundreds of truth-seekers as one of Sri Aurobindo's most revealing pronouncements defining boldly the limits of reason which swears first and last by logic. In fact, I was deeply shaken, because I had come to hail reason as the ultimate pilot to the harbour of Truth, Peace and abiding Harmony following unwaveringly the clue of Reason based on mental logic. When I received this letter I felt an electric shiver zig-zagging up my spine, as Sri Ramakrishna's simile flashed through my memory, that one has to extract a thorn with another after which both the thorns have to be thrown away : ergo, the thorn of rational doubt must be plucked with reason to be led finally to the blissful truth of the spirit after which reason can be safely dispensed with. "Eureka !" sang my heart now coming home at last. "I must, from now on, accept faith and not reason, as the monitor in my quest for spiritual truth." Sri Aurobindo shed more light on this question in another letter :

"You must get rid of an exaggerated insistence on the use of reason and the correctness of your individual reasoning and its right to decide on all matters. The reason

> has its place especially with regard to certain physical things and wordly questions—though even there is a very fallible judge—but its claim to be the decisive authority in matters of Yoga or in spiritual things is untenable. . . It has always been understood that the reason and its logic and its judgment cannot give you the realisation of spiritual truths but can only assist in an intellectual presentation of ideal; realisation comes by intuition and inner experience. Reason and intellectuality cannot make you see the Divine, it is the soul that sees . . . one can depend on one's reason in other matters . . . but it is not safe to depend on it alone in matters which escape its jurisdiction, especially in spiritual realisation and in matters of Yoga which belongs to a different order of knowledge."[5]

He went on explaining to me with an infinite patience which had to be seen to be believed, a feat which only his divine love could achieve. And it began like this.

It was I who first started asking him questions about the ideology and *modus operandi* of his Integral Yoga. But as he answered most of my pointed questions I showed his letters joyously to my brother disciples who, taking their cue from me, began, in their turn, to send him long letters bristling with all sorts of questions. That was understandable, but the amazing thing was that one who had declined Dr. Radhakrishnan's repeated requests to contribute an article should have so readily responded to the likes of us and gone on answering our interminable questions not only about yoga, but about poetry, personalities, metres, the riddle of the world and what not ! I often wondered how could a Colossus of his stature go on thus spending his precious time and energy on writing no end of letters to us, importunate Lilliputians ! To think that one whom the Indian National Congress implored again and again to resume the country's leadership, a savant whose writings were universally admired and, above all, a great poet whose verses inspired hundreds of litterateurs should have met half-ways us his inconsiderate proteges who not only failed him but actually misunderstood his teaching over and and over again ! He wrote to me a few years later (during which time he had gone on writing numerous letters to us four or five hours nightly) that he had to cry halt with a sigh because his letters had not been of much

material help to his questioning critics. I asked him lightly why on earth did he choose to complain of feckless critics—he being what he was : a deputy of the Divine. To that he replied gallantly : "But why on earth do you deny me the right even to a divine grumble ?"[6]

But although he wanted to make light of the tragedy, I could not help but regret that he had to come down constantly to *our* level to give us the guidance we needed and yet refused to accept, which made him sigh and grumble ![7] But then was this not the most convincing proof of his love divine which made him write in Bengali to a careless female disciple how to hold the broom while sweeping the floor ? He wrote any number of such letters. He wrote about it all in a subsequent letter to me :

> "It is only divine love which can bear the burden I have to bear, that all have to bear who have sacrified everything else to the one aim of uplifting earth out of its darkness to the Divine. The Gallio-like *'je-m'en-fichee-ism* (I don't care) would not carry me one step."

He has improvised on this soul-stirring theme of love divine in his *Savitri* :

> "The great who come to save this suffering world . . .
> Must pass beneath the yoke of grief and pain . . .
> On their shoulders they must bear man's load of fate,
> How shall he cure the ills he never felt ?
> He carries the suffering world in his own breast,
> Its sins weigh on his thoughts, its grief is his . . ,
> His march is a battle and a pilgrimage."[8]

This assertion was intrinsically auto-biographical. He wrote to me in 1935 :

> "But what strange ideas again !—that I was born with a supramental temperament and that I know nothing of hard realities ! Good God ! My whole life has been a struggle with hard realities, from hardships, starvation in England, and constant dangers and fierce difficulties continually cropping up

here in Pondicherry external and internal. My life has been a battle from its early years and is still a battle . . ."

There was a time when a gang of goondas was appointed to kidnap him from Pondicherry to be delivered to the British C.I.D. in Madras. A dear friend of mine one—of his oldest disciples—told me that they had to stand guard at night with revolvers. A hair-raising drama, indeed !

But this was not all. He was at this time (1910-13) such a complete destitute that he had to write again and again to friends to send him some money urgently. He wrote to one Anandarao (June 1912) :

> "At present I am at the height of my difficulties, in debt, with no money for the morrow and all who could help are[9] . . . beyond communication."[10] To another (July 3, 1912) : "I send enclosed a letter to our Marathi friend . . . procure for me by will power or any other power in heaven or earth Rs. 50, at least as a loan." To another : "I need Rs. 50 for own expenses and Rs. 10 not for myself, but still absolutely indispensable." (5-5-1914).[11]

But his sigh notwithstanding, his letters to us, his accepted disciples, did serve a divine purpose in that they came to appease, albiet partially, our long-standing grievance that he had chosen to stay unapproachable and all but invisible. A poet friend of mine—now, alas, no more !—often wailed that Gurudev had grown into a legend in his life-time—an *akasher Bhagavan,* a Deity of the sky !

Yes, that was the crux of the trouble, the cause of sigh so many of us heaved intermittently to no purpose till once, after four years of self-conflict under his aegis, I finally decided to call it a day and wrote to him a valedictory letter saying that it was not feasible to practise his Yoga without any personal contact with him. So—I raced on in my jeremiad—I was going to leave him for good. I asked him to forgive me but he must dismiss me now, I wrote, if only to be relieved of a useless burden . . . and so on and so forth. To that he replied instantly. It was a very moving letter. He wrote : (10-5-32).

"It is quite impossible for me to dismiss you or consent to your going away like this from us. If the idea of this kind of separation is possible to you, for us it is inconceivable that our close relation should end like this. I had thought that the love and affection that the Mother and I bear to you had been made evident by us. But if you say you cannot believe in it or cannot accept it with the limitations on its outward manifestation that not our choice but inexorable necessity imposes on us for a time, I do not know how to convince you. I could not believe that you would really find it in your heart to go or take such a step when it came to the point. As it is, I can only appeal to you not to allow yourself to be swept away by this attack, to remain faithful even in suffering to your soul that brought you here and to believe in our love that can never waver."

I wrote back, of course, asking to be forgiven, upon which he wrote to me again, reassuring me : (16-5-32).

"You do not belong to yourself—you belong to the Divine and myself . . . I have cherished you like a friend and a son and have poured on you my force to develop your powers—to make an equal development in the yoga. We claim the right to keep you here as our own with us."

It was this innate tenderness of his incredible love that held me captive at his feet for over two decades, enabling me to fend off the "attacks" of the demonic forces which strove sleeplessly to wean me from him because he *was* appointed by the Divine to divinise our human nature. It is to fulfil this mission that he employed his Messianic power, in prose and verse, to convince us about the utter reality of the Divine-Grace which alone could make the clod claim kinship with God.

That he was missioned by the Supreme to "make the earth a mate and peer of heaven,"[12] I did believe in my heart of hearts, especially in my breathtaking moments of flaming aspiration and ecstatic fervour when I was most vividly conscious of my blessedness in winning the love of such a king among men, but alas, there was the Old Adam in me that came in the way and made me hark back to what I had left to seek refuge at his

hallowed feet.

This is no mere sentimental effervescence. Those who have once savoured his alchemic love and experienced its miraculous power of making faith flower in the mire of doubt could recant nevermore, still less disown the right of his love's ownership, a love which never spoke *de haut en bas*, nor failed to come down to our abyss to elevate us to the peak of our natal home. At least I did feel inspite of all my recalcitrance that he was born with the Lord's seal of authority to grant up the passport to heaven's portals with the miracle signature of his love divine.

But his love was made not merely of tenderness : there was an element of intolerant fire in it which visited to purge the gold in our heart of all its dross. In a letter he wrote about his love which began with the human element but changed gradually into its divine counterpart :

> "First about human love in Sadhana. The soul's turning through love to the Divine must be through a love that is essentially divine, but as the instrument of expression at first is a human nature, it takes the form of human love and *bhakti*. It is only as the consciousness deepens, heightens and changes that the greater eternal love can grow in it and openly transform the human into the divine."

Then referring to my "harking back" to what I still sometimes regretted to forfeit, he added :[13]

> "You describe the rich human egoistic life you might have lived and you say : 'Not altogether a wretched life; you will admit.' On paper it sounds very glowing and satisfactory, as you describe it. But there is no real or final satisfaction in it, except for those who are too common or trivial to seek anything else, and even they are not really satisfied or happy,—and in the end it tires and palls. Sorrow and illness, clash and strife, disappointment, disillusionment, and all kinds of human suffering come and beat its glow to pieces—and then decay and death. That is the vital egoistic life as man has found throughout the ages, and yet it is that which this part of your vital regrets ? How do you fail to see, when you lay so much stress on the desirability of a merely human

consciousness, that suffering is its badge? When the vital resists the change from the human into the divine consciousness, what it is defending is its right to sorrow and suffering and all the rest of it, varied and relieved no doubt by some vital or mental pleasure and satisfactions, but very partially relieved by them and only for a time. In your own case, it was already beginning to pall on you and that was why you turned from it."

Sri Aurobindo's letter recalled to my mind an inspiring poem of A.E. (George Russell) whom he loved and called a Yogi-poet:

What shall they have, the wise,
Who stay by the familiar ways . . .
Who shun the infinite desire
And never make the sacrifice
By which the soul is changed to fire?

Sri Aurobindo never belonged to this school of the worldly-wise who play safe; he aligned himself, first and last, to the Pleiad who cannot help but stake their all for the All-in-all, who put all their eggs in one basket, hailing the "infinite desire," set on sacrificing the certain for the great Uncertain. No wonder his soul has been transformed early by the fire of the reckless revolutionary to culminate, eventually, in the unquenchable Flame (*Agni*) of the born yogi who sang with the Upanishad: "*Nalpe sukham asti*" "that which perishes can bring no abiding bliss."[14] Indeed, there is a very moving song of Dwijendralal's which always reminded me of Sri Aurobindo's mystic appeal to answer the Flute-call of the Infinite:

*Oi mahasindhur opar theke ki sangita bhese ase . . .*
What haunting strains of music, hark, come wafted on the breeze
From the other shore—beyond the bourneless deep? Who calls to me
So tenderly: "O come away! here all is song and peace
In eternal spring, unmarred by death and dark disharmony:
The earth's evergreen and gloom is banished everlastingly.

Why groan beneath life's dismal load, and grasping at shadows, cry,
When the Ocean of Nectar chants below and the Moon of Grace on high ?
Disown your chains, 'tis time now you returned to your home again,
Nor blindly hug your pen, fool, by the Siren Maya beguiled.
Know : only the ones who've loved me shall my termless Bliss attain :
How can you still in exile stay in an alien world, my child ?"

## Notes and References

1. *Vedahametam purusam mahantum*
   *adityavarnam tamasah parastat*
   (SHVETASHVATARA UPANISHAD)
2. I also aked him whether our illuminates in India were right in holding that in the domain of the soul, as against that of the mind, one must first *accept* before one could begin to *know*. He answered in the affirmative in his advocacy of faith.
3. *More Lights on Yoga*, p. 106.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
5. This famous oft-quoted letter is printed in full in Sri Aurobindo's *Letters on Yoga*—Tome One, p. 158.
6. Printed in my *Among the Great* . . . p. 341.
7. Once he wrote to me : "If they don't want to follow me why do they ask me lead ?
8. *Savitri*, V. 2.
9. Centenary, Supplement Vol. 26, p. 425.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 426.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 451.
12. *Savitri*, The Book of Everlasting Day, Book XI.
13. Quoted from my *Among the Great*, p. 259—also printed subsequently in his *Letters on Yoga*, Tome I, p. 80.
14. *Call of Brindaban* (translation mine)—Dwijendra Dipali, p. 33.

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## SRI AUROBINDO : SUPERMAN OR SUPERTALK

CLAUDE ALVARES

This is how he came to Pondicherry. One night, while at the office of the *Karmayogin*, the fiery nationalist paper he edited, he received secret information that the government intended to search the office and arrest him. He did not delay. In ten minutes, he was at the river *ghat*, and in a boat travelling the Ganges; in a few hours, he reached French Chandernagore; in a few days, in a boat manned by some young revolutionaries of Uttarpara; he slipped to Calcutta, where he boarded the *Dupleix* to reach French Pondicherry on 4 April 1910, finally safe from British hands.

(Later, he was to write that in 'inner voice' had prompted his decision to enter French India. This 'inner voice' however was a rationalization of a necessity forced on him by circumstance. We must remember that aside from French India, he had *no other refuge* from the pursuing British.)

In Pondicherry, political exile was transmuted into a preoccupation with yoga; and visions began to shake his frame and expand his mind. Standing as it were on his own spiritual greatness—a distinction he accepts and discusses with ease in a volume *On Himself*—he touched the ceiling of mental existence, of Mind, where he glimpsed the next stage and consequence of nature's struggle and history : a race of supermen, gnostic beings, their minds divinised, their bodies charged with immortality through

the presence of a supra-mental consciousness, constituting thus a divine life on earth, the Mystical Body of Brahman.

Here too, very much like Upton Sinclair's Jesus,[1] who realizes one day that he is not merely a country carpenter but the Messiah, the Son of God, Aurobindo and his followers were seized of a conviction that he was an *avatar*, a reincarnation of Krishna, the Samkhyan *Purusha*.

*Prakriti* was a French lady, Mrs. Mira Richard, on board the *Kaya Muru*, en route for French India, in March 1914. And the Samkhya says, when Purusha and Prakriti come into contact, evolution begins.

The War, however, forced an interruption and Mrs. Richard, with her husband, returned to France. But she was back in the April of 1920. Slightly later, Aurobindo announced to all his followers that she was indeed an incarnation of the divine Mother, *Mahakali*, and to be therefore regarded henceforth as his spiritual equal and partner. In 1926, he retired into almost total seclusion and Mira became the Mother of the Ashram.

The mystification of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had begun, if only for their small band of followers. For in a country where *avatars* proliferate and *gurus* become godmen with divine facility, their claims to divinity were not very distinctly heard.

However, they continued their yoga, aiming at a complete organic change from one grade of evolution to another, a total divinization not only of mentality and vitality but also a physicality, a transformed body ultimately functioning like a god immune to disease, decay and death.'[2] This would be possible when the Supermind, the creative force and aspect of *Satchidananda*, descended into the material dimension through the yogic efforts of the two pioneer *avatars*.

Then, all of a sudden, in 1950, Aurobindo died. Of a disease. And the Ashram reeled under the shock and the blow.

The Mother however quickly restored confidence. Aurobindo is not dead, she declared. He has merely 'withdrawn' from his physical body for it proved to be too frigid in its response to the blandishments of the Supermind. His body, therefore, was not ready for the transformation; it resisted all attempts at it. So he had to sacrifice himself to dissolve that resistance.

Nobody explained why Aurobindo waited for a disease to force him into 'withdrawal'.

The Mother, now the sole agent left to bring about the fruition of Aurobindo's vision, carried on her yoga.

In 1956, on the 29th of February, came the startling news that the supra-mental consciousness had descended on the earth's atmosphere. ("The Supermind made an initial entry into the subtler side of the whole earth-plane and became a permanent part of the earth's future evolution; now inevitably, in the course of time, the Supermind would take organic form in the gross side of the terrestrial plane.'[3]) It was now only a matter of 'working out the consequences.'

In 1973, on November 17, at the age of 94, the Mother died of old age.

Fifth plummetted, but was raised again, this time by the pontifications of the senior *sadhaks* of the Ashram.

The Mother did not die, they asserted; she is not dead; she withdrew like Sri Aurobindo.

This is what Nolini Kanta Gupta, the seniormost *sadhak* said :

> The Mother's body belonged to the old creation. It was meant to be the pedestal of the New Body. It served its purpose well. The New body will come.
> The revival of her body would have meant revival of the old troubles in the body. The body troubles were eliminated as far as could be done by her while in the body—farther was not possible. For a new mutation, a new procedure was needed. 'Death' was the first stage in the process.[4]

Another explanation came from M.P. Pandit :

> A new body was under formation, the supra-mental body, in which she was to take her embodiment as the end-result of the transformation of this body. She gave in *Notes on the Way* descriptions of this body, described how it looked. And about a year ago she told someone. 'I am trying to force this material body into that body but I have not been able to get the clue. . .'[5]
> One day (continues Pandit) it flashed to me that as soon as that luminous body was ready the Mother would just walk into it without dying, 'without dying' means not necessarily keeping the body, but without the gap in consciousness; keeping

up the continuity of the personality she would just cross into that luminous body.
That evening at 7.25 p.m. (November 17), the Mother withdrew from her body. They say the cause was heart failure, but let me tell you the heart failure was not the cause, the heart failure was the result of her withdrawal. . .'[6]

These tortuous defences would make Aurobindo turn in his *samadhi*, for they go against the genius, the spirit and the essence of his integral philosophy, the worth of which lay in its emphasis on the value of the previous levels of existence (matter, life and mind) because of their integration in the final essence of supramental beings. Apologies in the form of the body prolific, of old and new creations, fall outside the logical possibilities of the Aurobindovian philosophical system.

Significantly, it was only after Aurobindo's death, and during the absolute reign of the Mother, that his philosophy underwent these mutations. It is for this reason that no serious student of Aurobindo's philosophy considers the Mother's ideas as part of the sages' system; her idiosyncrasies proliferated as her rule hardened. Morarji Desai during his visit to the Ashram during the time of Aurobindo noted already then how she 'dressed in costly saris and used all the modern accessories of make-up.'[7] Later these accessories only served to accentuate the image of decay. She often distributed flowers and spoke on Beauty, but when she died—this must be admitted—she was one of the ugliest women in the world. By that time however she had sedulously and discreetly provided the grounds for her eventual sanctification. Her *darshans* remained till the end a theatrical performance. Today, she outsells Aurobindo : the earnest visitor to Pondicherry will be dismayed to find that all talk centres round her dominating personality. But disciples are like children—they need mothers always.

It is for reasons such as these that the question weighing most uneasily on men's minds is whether the supra-mental consciousness did 'descend on the material plane' in 1956. Evidence that is usually pedalled in favour of its occurrence, while it may seem conclusive for Auro-bhaktas, seems fatuous and amusing to others.

Internationally, a number of happenings have been attributed to the force and influence of the Supermind. For example, during the Bangladesh War of Liberation, when news reached the Ashram

that the US Seventh Fleet had passed Singapore and entered the Bay of Bengal, one of the Ashram disciples is reported to have sent in a message to the Mother asking whether the fall of Dacca could not be expedited. And of course, Dacca fell the next day. I have not been able to get Jagjit Singh Arora's opinion on this.

In 1956, to give another example, a senior statesman in Delhi from his knowledge of Mid-Eastern affairs, deduced that the Suez Canal crisis would erupt on the 9th of November of that year. The crisis actually peaked on the 2nd. Our diplomat is reported to have been perplexed at this reversal of his sagacity, until he met the Mother, on a chance visit, and she told him that he had not taken one important factor in his calculations : the supra-mental force had played the necessary havoc with his logic.

The founding of an institute for Psychical Research in the USSR is also cited as a piece of evidence, though all it may actually prove is that the Russians are getting barmier. It is also claimed that henceforth there will never be a nuclear war among nations. A very safe prediction, for if one does take place, there will be no one left alive to check this. And so on.

In most other people's minds, however, there are considerable and weightier reasons for denying altogether the Mother's claim that the divine has come down on earth. The evidence for this is woven into the very history and fabric of the Ashram, its development and growth, and its role in the life of Pondicherry.

The tiny town of Pondicherry is conveniently sliced into two residential units, a 'white' section and a 'black' section, by an 18-foot-broad canal called the *Quai de Gingy*. When the French ruled the roost, they occupied the white section, and the local Tamils the other. The white section is bounded on the East by the sea.

When the French left in 1954, the Ashram and its inmates came to monopolize this white section (the buildings are all painted white.) Economically, the situation on both sides of the *Quai* remained the same. The local people on the West of the canal lived (as they do today) in pretty gruesome conditions, not very different from those in which a number of their countrymen live; so that today an ironical situation has arisen : on one side of the *Quai* people are struggling to live human lives; on the other, a group of people are attempting to create super-man.

The Ashram at its inception in 1926 had decided to remain

solely a spiritual organization. As it grew in size, however, certain anomalies arose in its functioning, chief of which centred round its attitude to Pondicherry's merger with India, around the time of the country's independence. As Aurobindo was no longer in control of the Ashram, the peculiar attitudes of the Mother came to the fore.

Not surprisingly, the Archives of the Government of India of that period confirm that the Ashram stood solidly against French decolonization. Undoubtedly, the Ashram received very favoured treatment from the French administration in the form of exemption from fees and taxes; besides, its head was a French woman.

G. Parthasarathy, then reporting for the *Hindu,* wrote in 1948 :

> The wide currency given to the idea of a free and independent India, at any rate, a free Pondicherry which will maintain close relations with both France and India, has only been possible because of the moral support given to it by the Ashram. . . . The French Ambassador, M. Levi, is now openly canvassing the possibilities of making the French settlements into another Monaco or Andora. M. Baron, the Governor, seeks to impress on French Indian politicians the virtues of neutrality as the means of avoiding hostility both from India and France. This propaganda done from such influential quarters. . . . is meant to divide the nationalist forces. And it is stressed by local observers that the campaign would have had little value but for the support of the Ashram.
>
> (Aurobindo had once said : 'First therefore become Indians.')

However, when it became increasingly clear that Pondicherry would become a part of India, the Ashram reversed its stand to jump on to the merger bandwagon. But the alien attitude remained. For example, when the whole country was plunged in gloom on 1964 on the death of Nehru, the Ashram remained untouched by grief, the Indian flag was not lowered, and the Aurobindo International Centre of Education did not close as a mark of respect to the departed leader.

Ironically, in 1956 (the very year the Mother announced the descent of the supra-mental presence) the workers of the Ashram

struck work on grounds of low wages, insecurity of service, meagre fixed D.A. and lack of leave facilities. More than a hundred of them were dismissed. Later, the majority were taken back, except 35 who remained staunch unionists. The Ashram authorities did not give in even when two of these dismissed workers were hospitalized after a prolonged hunger strike.

Tensions were aggravated further when the people of Pondicherry found the Ashram overflowing gradually with Bengalis and Gujaratis (who could speak French but not Tamil). And in the anti-Hindi agitation that swept the South in 1965, the Ashram was attacked by riotous mobs. Arrested rioters were later identified as disgruntled employees and fishermen whose lands had been appropriated and converted into Ashram playgrounds.

The most remarkable part of this agitation came *after* it had subsided. The Mother (an *avatar* touched by supramental light) issued a pamphlet condemning the acts of violence on the Ashram buildings and ended up accusing the Christians, the DMK, the Communists, the merchant community, and the students—all of whom together make up the total population of Pondicherry—of antipathy to the Ashram. The Ashram had by this time finalized plans for the Rs. 1,000 crore international city of Auroville, an experiment dedicated *to creating human unity and international fellowship*.

The agitation, however, prompted questions in Parliament, as a result of which a Joint Secretary from the Union Government was deputed to conduct an inquiry and file a report. The report was found unfavourable to the Ashram and consequently quietly suppressed.

The report spoke about the 'evolution' of Ashram activities and the erosion of its previous spiritual intentions, its entry into commerce and industry in a big way. It complained against the favoured treatment given to the Ashram by the Governments of India and the Union Territory of Pondicherry in the granting of licences and the supply of raw materials, including zinc, cement and iron. The report mentioned as an example how a Pondicherry Government order allotting licences for zinc sheets to local traders was later reversed by a Central authority, which freshly granted a licence for the purchase of 17 lakh worth of zinc sheets to Honesty (*sic* !) Enterprises, the economic holding of the Ashram.

The report also listed the 43 industries either owned or

controlled by the Ashram or by devotees who, the report suggested, were using the Ashram's position as a charitable organization to avoid taxes. It detailed the value (running into several crores of rupees) of the properties owned by the Ashram in Pondicherry itself. It also compared the wages earned by Ashram employees to those earned by others elsewhere in the area and found them lower than the mean. (The Ashram employs practically an army of workers including domestic servants, gardners, mechanics, carpenters, moulders, electricians, masons, printing press workers, weavers, farm and dairy hands, tailors, shop assistants, cooks, cobblers, workers in soda, sugar, metal and cottage industries, and so on.).

It finally concluded that the root cause of the antipathy of the local people could be traced to these economic reasons : exploited labour, small traders driven out of business and the local merchant community forced out of competition since it could not face the huge capital behind Ashram holdings.

Today, the situation is very much the same, probably worse. The week I was in Pondicherry, the Ashram announced plans to enter the fishing industry. Local fishermen, who use oar-driven boats, predict that the mechanised vessels of the Ashram will soon knock them out of the market.

Every single Pondicherry native I talked to spoke bitterly of the Ashramites as people who thought themselves a new and separate class and continuously behaving thus, literally living in a seclusion prompted by spiritual arrogance and smugness. It would appear that an organization pledged to transforming or aiding the transformation of human potential, would not show such a callous disregard for what goes on outside its portals. Yet the local people complain of being treated 'like dogs.' They are not allowed to enter Ashram buildings, partake of Ashram sports or study at the education centre. However, foreigners and tourists are welcomed without reservation. MPs and ministers arrive and their photographs are published with pride in the Ashram journals. The Ashramites, however, are not the only people in India who believe that ministers are exemplars of the new super-consciousness.

Morarji Desai supports what we have said above. He writes of one part of his visit to Pondicherry and the Ashram :

I also got the impression that those people who were influential in society received greater attention and care when they came to the Ashram. Shri Hukmichand came to Pondicherry while I was there and was received with great enthusiasm and cordiality. I had never heard of him having any religious philosophy.[8]

The Ashram activities are now extending beyond Pondicherry. Recently Ashramites were found at work in the State Bank Offices in Bombay, a contract being given them by Mr. R.K. Talwar, State Bank Chairman, an Aurobindo devotee. The State Bank uses its funds also to advertise in Ashram journals regularly, though these have a commercially valueless circulation.

Local feeling against the Ashram flared again recently when the proposal to name the coming Pondicherry university after Aurobindo was made public. The proposal was withdrawn following a total bandh, the first in Pondicherry political history.

Another place for discrimination is the Aurobindo International Centre of Education. Here 700 students are taught by 200 professors ! Until the mid-sixties, the Centre, although aided heavily by the Education Ministry in Delhi, was not open to the public. After the gates were opened for all, fees (Rs. 150) became a strong disincentive to the locals. The degree is not recognized by other institutions. However, no charitable institution in the country receives grants from Government that does not cater to people of all classes and creeds and income groups. The Pondicherry Centre is an unintelligible phenomenon.

All the available evidence goes to prove that the Ashram is not a charitable organization at all. Its Olympic-style swimming-pool, the sports grounds, the hospitals, the education centre, are out of bounds for the people of Pondicherry though they have been constructed partly through public funds. The profits of the Ashram's commercial activities are ploughed back into its coffers; they do not go into the development of the state and its people.

Auroville, the Ashram's brainchild, situated on the borders of Pondicherry and entering into large tracts of Tamil Nadu, comes more as a shock than as a revelation of glorious visions. Most foreigners are perplexed on seeing it; Rs. 1,000 crore being

spent to create a new city, replete with cultural centres, industrial units, ultra-modern residential apartments and including pavilions that will *serve sixteen different types of Indian foods*, while in the villages in Auroville itself, poverty is still pervasive, total.

The fate of the 20-odd villages in the Auroville area is a question. Authorities say they will be 'incorporated' into the life of Auroville. Right now, their inhabitants do most of the manual labour in Auroville, milking the cows and tilling the fields. But since Auroville will soon automate its dairy industry, and later the others, the labour of these villagers will no longer be needed. What then ? One Frenchman had a drastic answer : 'If they do not find the atmosphere congenial, they will be welcome to leave. But while they're here we'll provide them with employment' and, I might add, that at the cheapest rates going.

The manner of employment is a tourist stunt : in one village, three young boys have been dressed in clean saffron shirts and placed in a 'modern' hut where they are working at *agarbattis*. The tourists are shown this, and think the set-up very commendable. Hardly have you left the hut, however, when you find 150 children outside, gaping at the whiteskins, hungry, unschooled.

But it would be an error to think that the Ashram and Auroville are big centres for the sole production of supertalk about superbeings and supercities. Some of the foreigners at Auroville are very sincere people—they have to spend a year there working on their own resources before they can be accepted into the community. However, one does not find the atmosphere of an Israeli *kibbutz* anywhere. All the menial jobs, like carrying cowdung around, all manual jobs, are left to the second-class citizens of Pondicherry.

All said and done, as long as the Ashram provokes hostility and anger in the rest of Pondicherry, it is nowhere near the benign glow of supra-mental existence. Some of the younger Ashramites are disillusioned with the attitude of the Ashram seniors to people with no other qualification than a claim to huge bank accounts. Dissent is not possible and the Ashram is well on its way towards becoming another Ford Corporation.

The statement of a student to the Ashram a few years ago still retains its edge and poignancy : 'You claim to be a spiritual organization. Then please tell us WHY people around you are (according to you) your enemies ? Why after so many years of

your existence have you not been able to win the love and esteem of the people around you ?

This souring of the dreams of Aurobindo in today's Pondicherry is to my mind not so much a consequence of the pervasiveness of human fallibility, it stems rather from a denial of the fact of such weakness and concomitant uncritical inflation of personalities. The roots of this malady have their origin in in Aurobindo himself. The day he decided to accept the adulation of his obsequious fawning disciples and glimpsed in himself elements of avatarhood saw the birth of the spiritual arrogance that hovers thickly around the high-brows of many Ashram inmates today, the same day also saw the crystallization of Aurobindo's view that *his weltanschauung* was indubitably inspired by a final supra-mental vision of truth beyond all dogmas and creeds, beyond all conflicting ideologies.

In subscribing to this tendency, Aurobindo had obviously overlooked Hegel. We know the Hegel had once ended his lecture series with the statement that history had indeed culminated with and in his philosophy. Aurobindo had of course a similar opinion about his own philosophy by the time he died. But neither could be taught that apparent megalomania is entalied in the very philosophic quest for comprehensive truth itself. After all, whoever feels he has actually found comprehensive truth cannot perhaps be blamed for viewing all former philosophies as having been aiming somehow at what he has found. In a sense perhaps he is honouring them when he supposes this.

Such an attitude of general superiority is radically evident in Aurobindo's claim, for example, to have written *the* perfect poetry, the future poetry. The literary critic, Mr. Nissim Ezekiel, has mercifully laid that claim to rest. What could *any* critic do when confronted with passages such as these ? :

'In poetry anything can pass—for instance, my "voice of a tilted nose" :

O voice of a tilted nose,
Speak but speak not in prose !
Nose like a blushing rose,
O Joyce of a tilted nose !
This is high poetry but put it in prose and it sounds insane.'[9]

In an age that has 'metaphysically shuddered' at the discoveries of Einstein, Planck and Bohr, we have perforce to assume a sceptical attitude toward the claim of any man to final answers about the structure of the universe or the essence of its truth. We remember immediately what Judge Learned Hand said : The mark of a free man is that ever-gnawing inner uncertainty as to whether or not he is right.' Or the declaration of the great atomic physicist, Niels Bohr : 'Every sentence I write must be understood not as an affirmation, but as a question.'

No man owns the whole truth; if he believes that he does, his belief will inevitably produce distortions in him and in those who profess to follow him. What a man *can* lay claim to is personal truth but here again were he to universalize this he would refuse to other men their own right and ability to reach their own truth. Gandhi's Truth, when applied to his sons, destroyed them. And the ideal city of Auroville will be ultimately constructed through the deprivation of the lands and means of livelihood of the peasants of more than 20-odd villages, which even now are resting uneasily in the area.

When I asked a tourist what he thought about the new city, he made a remarkably mature observation : 'I wonder whether Auroville is justified in a poor country like India; but should we forget the phenomenon of men so enthralled by a vision that they forget all else ?'

The Communists of Russia, we are told, were inspired by the Marxian utopia of a stateless, proletarian society : Aleksander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag* tells us how they went about it. The German Nazis had a similar aim but six million Jews provided the boost. That the disciples of Aurobindo have already become insensitive to the poor around them is an indication that they are driven by similar visionary utopias, and this, not to any lesser degree.

Critics of the French Jesuit, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin have pointed to his praise for totalitarian regimes, which he held to be in line with the essential trend of the 'cosmic' movement. The Jewish genocide was resolved by de Chardin as a necessary backfire preceding a phylogenetic boost to newer evolutionary phases. Tomorrow Aurobindoites might make similar claims. The indications are already there : both de Chardin and the Aurobindo group betray in their ideas a general lack of serious interest in social questions. In fact, what is most significant

about these visionaries is their over-riding impatience with the messiness of ordinary human life—the real mark of the totalitarian.

Life, de Chardin writes, 'shows signs . . . of requiring us by very virtue of its movement toward a state of higher Being, to sacrifice our individuality.'[10] In Aurobindo's opinion, individual consciousness will dissolve into a collective divine consciousness, which will no longer be *human* supramental consciousness. In such a situation, freedom will belong only to the supramental consciousness. We will be free only when we have repudiated our human significance. In order to save humanity then, we will first have to destroy it.

What really amazes me is that Aurobindo did not wish to accept one of the prime lessons of history, the tendency of all disciples to make use of their masters for their own selfish ends. What is taking place in Pondicherry today cannot be identified as anything other than the fabrication of a new religion. The central office of the Ashram is crowded with 'holy' pictures and objects: pictures of Aurobindo and the Mother stare at the inmate and the visitor from the walls of every room within the Ashram precincts. The personal lives of the two avatars are being carefully doctored in significant historical details. The Mother is no longer referred to (in her pre-Pondicherry phase) as Mrs. Mira Richard: her maiden name, Mira Elassa is used. Paul Richard has ceased to exist. No mention is made of Mrinalini, Aurobindo's wife.

Now Aurobindo's philosophical system is a vast one and it took him 29 volumes to examine every aspect of it. The possibility of error of course increases with the scope of the undertaking. After two years of careful study, I have found myself forced to the conclusion that the Aurobindovian system is, to a sufficiently large extent, scientifically and philosophically indefensible.

An important qualification is necessary here. In the past few years a number of books have been published eulogizing the philosophy of Aurobindo and its great relevance for our times. As far as I am aware no major critical analysis of his philosophy has yet appeared. This essay is an attempt to test the credibility of Aurobindo's system and measure its value against an index of sound opinion.

My starting point is the philosophy of science and the implications of the great discoveries in science that have taken

place during the past seven decades. Aurobindo might not have had the time or the inclination to enter into a proper study of the scientific picture of the world. Also, some of the great discoveries took place after his self-imposed seclusion. However, the theories of relatively and quanta were formulated in the first two decades of the twentieth century, early enough to merit sufficient attention. But I am willing to excuse these lapses.

However, I find it unreasonable to excuse professors of philosophy who talk quite glibly and unthinkingly today about the extraordinary brillance of his philosophy and its relevance to our contemporary understanding of the world. I disagree sharply with any of the glorious assessments of Aurobindo's philosophy primarily because I believe them to have been made not by serious thinkers on intrinsic grounds but by men who have found it beneficial to their own interest to jump on to the Aurobindo bandwagon, to cash in on the sudden popularity that his philosophy has attained in the West, particularly among people who have always been a little soft in the head whenever it came to accepting anything 'philosophical' from India. (Philosophies from India are like Indian handicrafts : they are valuable not because they have value for the life but because they come from exotic India).

I submit that the principal reason for the attractiveness of Aurobindo's philosophy has to do with its psychological reinforcements. Peter Medawar puts it thus : "Once again, there is a feeling of despondency and incompletness, a sense of doubt about the adequacy of man amounting in all to what a future historian might again describe as a failure of nerve. Intelligent and learned men may again seek comfort in an elevated kind of barminess. Mystical syntheses between science and religion, like the Cambridge Neo-Platonism of the mid-seventeenth century, have their counterpart today, perhaps in the writings and cult of Teilhard de Chardin and in a revival of faith in the Wisdom of the East.'[11] In the historical evolution of consciousness, the value of such attractions is temporary, as the later denouement of Cambridge Neo-Platonism shows.

The indefensibility of Aurobindo's philosophical system is due to a built-in obsolescence. The theories of relativity and quanta, the implications of Goedel's theorem, the significance of the second law of thermodynamics, and the elucidation of evolutionary processes at the level of the microsphere are *some* of the major

difficulties his philosophy must face. A philosophy or theology that does not take seriously the knowledge of the structure and development of the world and of man which the perspective of modern science affords, has no claim to any serious consideration as embodying truth. In Aurobindo's case, the absence of a critical approach to his ideas has greatly vitiated their relevance to our contemporary understanding of the world. Aurobindo, as I have already noted, formulated his opinions without being aware of the implications of the momentous discoveries in science that were taking place around him during his time and before. If its scientific innocence has been preserved till this day it is because of the presence of disciples who have suspended their critical faculties to swallow totally all he said, and because of the dominating influence of Mira Richard.

Like most Indian philosophers of yore, Aurobindo too was driven to claim that his philosophy was not only the most worthy but also the only possible interpretation of the essence of the *Prasthanatryayi* (which comprises the Upanishads, the Gita and the Brahma-Sutras). In other words, Aurobindo's meaning system remained solidly within the larger framework of the Indian tradition. He was an *Indian* philosopher, first and last. Scholars who do not understand the principal elements of the Indian philosophical tradition will find it difficult to make sense of a large amount of what he saps.

The major premise of his argument is assumed in the form of the Absolute (*Brahman*) of Indian thought, the fundamental reality behind the manifold appearances of this world. In Aurobindo, this reality has two aspects. In itself, it retains the non-qualifying qualities of the Absolute of Shankara: it is timeless, immutable, infinite, unknowable—ultimately, *neti, neti.* In its relation to the world, it is *Satchidananda.* Perhaps this second formulation is not quite accurate, for Satchidananda *is* the world and its forms, progressing through an evolutionary process from the initial stage of Complete Ignorance (matter) through Life and Mind, to Supermind (Spirit, absolute consciousness). *Maya* then is the ignorance that is inherent in our ordinary mental being which creates a false identification with the limited ego and thus inhibits us from realizing the nature of our true self and its potential. Each individual, each beings, is a spark of the Divine.

The conception of these truths is placed by Aurobindo in a cyclical context for a reason that is principally logical. Matter (ignorance) and Spirit (consciousness) are irrevocably opposed. There is no possibility therefore of spirit arising from matter, unless of course, it is already present in matter in a hidden state. In other words, unless we presuppose consciousness in matter we cannot explain its later emergence from it. To provide a basis for this view, Aurobindo introduces the process of 'involution' by which Satchidananda descends into matter, into Ignorance, then through 'evolution' progresses to a more unrestricted, unveiled and wholesome consciousness.

The terminus of such a process therefore must be its beginning; evolution will therefore continue till it reaches the stage of the Supermind or the Absolute fully conscious of itself, manifest in the collective supramental consciousness of gnostic beings. In other words, these gnostic beings, constituted essentially on the supramental plane, would create by their very existence a blanket of divine life on earth. Thus, will Brahman have consummated its 'supreme adventure' of attempting to manifest its light, truth and bliss under conditions which seemed totally antithetic to these qualities.

The logic of such a cyclical process or presupposition of a hidden consciousness is akin to the logic that took hold of men's minds after Darwin, which demanded divine intervention at the critical points of the evolutionary process. It was thought then that life's beginnings in a material base that was, phenomenologically at least, distinct and different from it, and likewise, the emergence of mind from life, could not be satisfactorily explained unless one presupposed the agency of the power of God.

However, scientists have been able to refine our understanding of the evolutionary process to such a remarkable degree that there is no more any necessity to think of 'critical' points of transition in the process requiring any divine agency; in fact, 'critical' points no longer exist, for what one now finds is a continuum without any sharp 'leaps.' It appears that there has been a tendency in evolution for matter to assume increasingly complex forms of organization in a hierarchy whereby the more complex are assembled out of the less so. There is, therefore, no more logical or empirical need for the Aurobindovian theory of cyclical evolution than there is for the theory that the Earth is flat.

As a matter of fact, every major component of Aurobindo's philosophy disintegrates when confronted with contemporary insights into our understanding of man and the universe. For example, an analysis of the law of entropy and the theory of relativity does not support, to any appreciable degree, Aurobindo's ideas of time and space.*

The proposition that forms the basis of our critique of Aurobindo's dilations on the nature of time excellently summarizes what the German physicist, Carl F. von Weizsaecker has discussed at length in *The History of Nature* and is to be found in Rushton Coulborn's *Feudalism in History*. It says: 'History is the fundamental knowledge in every world of existence and the physical scientist is at last being forced to recognize this.'

What is historical is temporal, temporary, contingent. The human consciousness that creates history is itself time-bound. Our sense of time and temporality is strictly in keeping with one of the most fundamental laws of our universe, the second law of thermodynamics or the law of entropy. If we examine carefully the history of our dominating ideas and pretensions, we notice various attempts to slip by the influence of this law. These began with Plato, who absolved his world of Ideas from any allegiance to it and went over to the other extreme of asserting that if there was any thing that was subject to that law, it was a valueless contamination. Indian systematic philosophy which culminated in Shankara also followed a similar pattern.

Scholars who are normally enthused over the contemporariness of Aurobindo in his attention to evolutionary theory are in for a rude shock. For whichever way the evolutionary process is defined and elucidated by scientists today, it *makes no difference* to Aurobindo at all. A philosophical system that claims to rely on evolution as a scientific fact, and then considers any further refinement or change in our thinking of it as irrelevant to its grand scheme, has something substantially erroneous in its very construction.

Aurobindo writes: 'A theory of spiritual evolution is not

*An objection could be raised here that it is unfair to apply the results of the law of entropy to Aurobindo's ideas of time. The objection is sustained if one intends to examine the system of Aurobindo in itself; it is over-ruled in an evaluation of the relevance of that philosophy *for our times*, which is the purpose of this essay.

identical with a scientific theory of form-evolution and physical life evolution; it must stand on its own inherent justification : it may accept the scientific account of physical evolution as a support or element, but the support is *no indispensable*.'[12]

In another place he writes again : . . . the development of one form of life out of a precedent less evolved form, natural selcction the struggle for life, the survival of acquired characteristics *may or may not be accepted* but the fact of a successive creation with developing plan in it is the one conclusion which is of primary consequence.'[13] It is indeed ironic that the very factors Aurobindo once considered 'not indispensable' have now been mapped in such great detail by scientists like Simpson, Monod and Dobzhansky that no vestige of any 'plan' is any more in evidence. Simpson caustically remarks : 'The extreme view that evolution is basically or overall an orthogenetic process is evidence that some scientists' minds tend to move in straight lines, not that evolution does.'[14]

The classical ontology of time was based on an attitude that had once coloured Plato's ideas. For Plato, as we know, the operations of this world were indeed a contaminated fall-out of a pristine would of Being-Ideas. The very word 'onto-logical' displays the interest of traditional metaphysicians in the logic of the *ontos*, the logic of being. The basis of being was timeless and so logic, if it intended to explain the relations of such a being, had also to be timeless. It is only in our own century, that we find Martin Heidegger repudiating the construction of being independent of time,. and beginning his thinking along the lines of an essential relation between Being and Time.

How is a timeless logic possible ? Simply, by eliminating all temporal and historical considerations from the perspective of thought. What we experience in consciousness is the fullness of time, historical time. An individual is a concrete concentration in historical time. As consciousnesses differ, time differs and no two things are therefore identical. For the circumstances differ with each individual as each one lives in his own specific time and is a combination of unique factors not available to anyone else in the unpredictable conspiracy of heredity and environment. Even twins, we must admit, are born one after the other.

Like Newton, Aurobindo understood time and space in absolute terms because he had to; he related his understanding of

both phenomena to the action of his Absolute and the constitution of his Absolute. Assuredly, this notion of absolute time was not meant to be a tool of understanding as Newton's was, but this does not absolve it from facing the same difficulties, presented especially by the theory of relativity.

The very conception of an Absolute does not include time. A philosopher might make the statement that the Absolute is an ontological necessity, but the grounds for making such a statement must remain exceedingly shaky and precarious. For we do not experience the Absolute, we reach it by a process of thought, by abstraction, by elimination, by the process of *neti, neti.* Aurobindo himself notes : 'When we look at existence itself, Time and Space disappear.'[15] In another place he writes : 'If this indefinable, infinite, timeless, spaceless Existence is, it is necessarily a pure absolute. It cannot be summed up in any quantity or quantities, it cannot be composed of any quality or combination of qualities. If all forms, quantities, qualities *were to disappear,* this would remain.'[16] He continues in another place : 'It is pure existence, eternal, infinite, indefinable, not affected by the succession of Time, not involved in the extension of space, beyond form, quantity, quality—Self only and absolute.'[17] This is a roundabout way of evading the law of entropy again. After Plato we cannot forget that permanence belongs only to the conceptual.

'Eternity is the common term between Time and the Timeless Spirit they are two-fold states of being and consciousness, one an eternity of immobile status, the other an eternity of motion in status (Time).'[18] Aurobindo then proceeds to provide the ontological basis of time and space. Here I quote passages where his stylistic gaucheries blur all his profoundly obscure insights.

He writes : 'Space would be Brahman extended for the holding together of forms and objects; Time would be Brahman self-extended for the deployment of the movement of self-power carrying forms and objects; the two would then be a dual aspect of one and the same self-extension of the cosmic Eternal.'[19]

Aurobindo therefore admits that time is real and eternal.

In another obfuscatory paragraph, he concludes : 'In its fundamental truth the original status of Time behind all its variations is nothing else than the eternity of the Eternal, just as the fundamental truth of Space, the original sense of its reality, is the infinity of the Infinite.'[20] Further,

> For Being can see the whole Time development [in what sense can a pure Absolute see ?] from outside or from above the movement; it can take a stable position within the movement and see the before and after in a fixed, determined or destined succession [God has become Laplace]; or it can take instead a mobile position in the movement, itself move with it from moment to moment and see all that has happened receding back into the past and all that has to happen coming towards it from the future: or else it may concentrate on the moment it occupies and see nothing but what is in that moment and immediately around or behind it.
> It can see Time from above and inside Time, exceeding it and not within it; it can see the Timeless develop the Timemovement without ceasing to be timeless, it can embrace the whole movement in a static and dynamic vision and put out at the same time something of itself into the moment-vision.[21]

After such excruciating gibberish, I prefer to stick to the fundamental insight of Heidegger's being-in-time, and relegate all non-temporal conceptions to the sphere of non-being, non-existence, non-meaning. For those however who *feel* that Aurobindo *has* something to say in passages like these, but who are never able to extract any of his ideas from his clumsy prose, Aurobindo has presented an escape hatch in the form of his Logic of the Infinite, which is actually no logic at all. A typical instance, relevant to what we have been discussing is :

> Their simultaneity (the Timeless Eternal and a Time Eternity), however contradictory and difficult to reconcile it might seem *to our finite surface seeing*, would be intrinsic and normal to the Maya or eternal self-knowledge and all knowledge of Brahman . . .[22]

In other words, if there are a couple of things that seem irreconcilable to our limited minds, we should not be unduly perturbed, since from the point of view of an Infinite Mind, they present a perfectly harmonious picture. Of course, Aurobindo is suggesting here that irreconcilables make no difficulty for him too, and that we should be free to draw the implications about a nature that has such powers.

In general, the philosophical implications of the theory of relativity and the limitations placed on nature by the law of entropy do not support Aurobindo's explanations of the phenomenon of time. The concept of eternity has been subjected to devastating criticism. We have no direct experience of eternity if the sense in which we have direct experience of time. More commonly, the word 'eternity' has been used to denote a state of timelessness, something of a qualitatively different order from an expanse of time, however long. And it is widely agreed that everlasting time and timelessness (the eternity of time and timelessness) are such totally different conceptions that any attempt to *unite* them must be extremely hazardous.

On the other hand, we live within time, indeed, within a strictly limited period of time. Heidegger put this very well when he insisted that temporality is the meaning of the Being of that entity which we call 'Dasein.' Temporality, rather than time, is the primordial state of being or existence, for each of us exists 'toward our end,' which is death. What Heidegger calls 'within-timeness' is something given *along with existence* itself. 'Temporality is the reason for the clock'; and, 'in a certain manner Dasein itself is the clock.'[23] Time-sense is a primary fact of consciousness.

Time itself is not however a part of the external world, as Aurobindo believed *Change is a fact of nature*. And biological change within our own organism is experienced subjectively in consciousness as time. Our human condition is firmly linked to the order of nature, throughout which there is a single direction of change. To the subjective awareness this is the direction of time.

The direction of time, or *time's arrow* as Eddington put it, we perceive from the operation of the law of entropy, which states that in any transformation of energy from one form to another in a closed system, the entropy of the system tends to increase, i.e., it may increase (and it in fact generally does so), or it may remain unchanged, but it never decreases. This law clearly expresses a fundamental limitation, imposed by nature itself, on the feasibility of transforming energy from one form to another completely. It stands for a definite trend in the natural order. And this trend points to a direction in time.

The basic biological change, which involves a continuing

increase of entropy, is internal to us and is experienced subjectively in consciousness. The sense of time which each one of us undoubtedly possesses may therefore be correlated directly with entropy increase, minimal though this may be in the case of biological, open-ended thermodynamic systems. Of course, it is not suggested that the experiencing subject recognizes his internal change as change entropy, but that change which is so characterized in the language of physical science is what underlies temporality as a fact of consciousness. For the trend of entropy is unidirectional.

As we noted before, all religions and a great number of absolutist philosophical systems attempt to convince their followers that a human being can evade the basic law of entropy; such, in fact, is the sum and substance of the idea and promise of immortality. The 'soul' of religious theory is not subject to the law, but the ordinary body is. Christians believe that this body will one day rise from the grave, *intacta*, and from that moment on be able to disdain for all time the jurisdiction of the second law. The Indian philosophy of rebirth, to which Aurobindo gave added impetus, is another variation on the same theme, created originally in humanity's childhood. Jacques Monod speaks ot man's continual urge to deny his contingency and is quite convinced that there must be a genetic source for man's drive to compose ontogenies and other allied security corporations.[24]

Aurobindo might not have heard of entropy, but what about the theory of relativity ? He had of course heard of Einstein. In a discussion on Eddington, Russell and Jeans, he noted : 'Russell ranks as a great mathematician but there too Eddington has one superiority over him; he is supposed to be the only one, so say some, one of the only five, say others, who have a complete understanding of Einstein's mathematical formulation; Russell is not counted among them and that perhaps disables him from understanding the full consequences of Relativity.'[25] Aurobindo was not one of the five who were supposed to have understood Einstein, and it is ironic that the implications of the theory do not bear out his own pontifications on time.

Newton's misleading definition of absolute time spoke of it as something which of itself flows equably without relation to anything external. We know now that there is no such thing as absolute time, any more than there is such a thing as absolute

space. If Newton predicated an absolute, physical, mathematical time, in terms, of which to express the equations of motions of classical mechanics, Aurobindo spoke of space and time as extensions of his Absolute. Newton's purpose in introducing absolute time was to introduce consistency into the theoretical characterization of a vast range of phenomena. And it was the discrepancies in classical mechanics that led Einstein to his theory of relativity, which formally rejected the conceptions of absolute space and time. Aurobindo, I am afraid, laid the foundations for the discrediting of his Absolute by relating space and time to it in absolute terms.

Aurobindo did talk of space-time, but not even he would be willing to admit that his formulation of the relation of these two phenomena was similar to what Einstein proposed. The theory of relativity is an epistemological theory, formulated for purpose of natural philosophy—it is the most perfect *representation* of external reality available to us, and in this sense it bears importantly upon every discipline which claims to say anything meaningful about external reality. At any rate, it destroys effectively the credibility of such a conception of time as Aorobindo proposed.

At the end of this discussion, I think it would we worthwhile to attach a few conclusions. Firstly, I do not think it profitable any more in our age, and for a long time in the future, to organize our experience in any final philosophy centred round an Absolute. This is not to deny that we shall come across a few men like Aurobindo who do not hesitate to rush in where wiser men fear to tread. What we should guard against is our perpetual tendency to universalize the validity of our experiences and to permit our imaginations to run away with the evidence. Many a time a genuine scientific theory has been manipulated and exploited to reinforce conclusions reached earlier by means other than scientific or frankly mythological.[26]

An example is provided by the talk current even today of 'cosmic evolution.' Now we can talk with some credibility of a cosmic evolution *only* as far as our small portion of the universe is concerned. This is because the theory of relativity effectively prohibits us from meaningfully talking about any 'simultaneous' events that are taking place in other parts of the universe. This is why it is non-sensical to talk in terms of an Absolute undergoing a cosmic process. For, an absolute, if it is to fulfil the proper

definition of an absolute, must embrace the totality of all experience, in fact, the entire universe and all the events in it. And this is something that we are barred for ever from even talking about. And we cannot talk in any proper sense of an Absolute when all that we actually mean is the cosmic process that we know about, that is the evolution of our star, the evolution of life on our earth and its final consummation. In other words, we have a limited absolute, which is of couse, no Absolute at all.

It is not my intention to blame Aurobindo in any way. He was born in a tradition in which truth has always been conceived in absolute terms, and his examination of the phenomenon of evolution led him to think of it in terms of his hereditary philosophic insights.

In the end, the picture of the world as it emerges from any a-historical, a-temporal theory or conceptualization must lead to distorted and illusory claims. For man is a historical being; mankind and history must one day find an end, if the law of entropy follows its rigorous course. Only the gods are a-temporal, a-historical, which means, for our purposes, no different from non-being, nothing, non-meaning. In any absolutist system of reality the world is generally looked upon as connected in every detail—any input in a part of the system affects the system as a whole. We can see the distortions of absolutist thinking in the cosmic determinism of Laplace. Or in the moral determinism of Mahatma Gandhi, who often felt that all his failures in national affairs were due to his failures in his moral life to change his environment. Or in Aurobindo, who was convinced that he was in fact, through his supra-mental power, aiding the Allies in their final victory over Hitler.

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15. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Volume 18, p. 74.
16 *Ibid.*, p. 75.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 359-60.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 360.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 362.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 363.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 364.
23. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, London, pp. 426-72.
24. Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity*, Collins.
25. Sri Aurobindo, *On Himself*, Volume 26, p. 386. Aurobindo here compounds his ignorance. Russell was not a mathematician; he was a logician and a philosopher of mathematics as well as of science. His magnum opus, *Principia Mathematica*, of which he was co-author with Whitehead, is a work on the nature of mathematics, not on mathematics proper as, for example, is the work of Newton, Gauss, Weierstrass, *et. al.* Secondly, one does not have to be a creative mathematician in order to understand fully the theory of relativity—just as one does not have to be a poet in order to understand poetry. Indeed, unknown to Aurobindo, Russell has written a well-known exposition of the theory of relativity—*The ABC of Relativity*—and Whitehead had proposed an alternative theory of relativity !
26. A. MacIntyre (Ed.), *Metaphysical Beliefs*, London, 1957. The point referred to is discussed by Toulmin in his essay, 'Contemporary Scientific Mythology.'

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## SRI AUROBINDO : THE SWARAJIST AND VEDANTIST

Verinder Grover*

Sri Aurobindo is popularly known for having inspired the *Swadeshi* movement. The movement was not a mere struggle for economic independence of India but also connoted a general expression standing for India's struggle for absolute *Swaraj* or independence from the British rule. Few Indian leaders are known to have made a more significant and fruitful contribution towards the concept of *Purna Swaraj* than Sri Aurobindo. He also tried to transform this ideal into a reality by devising practical steps for achieving this goal. He was greatly moved to join Bengal politics to fulfil his fervant hope. Very soon he won for himself his destined place in the revolutionary movement of the country. He could directly inspire this movement by virtue of his continuous contributions through the daily *Bande Mataram.* The editorial he contributed to this daily were read with avidity all over the country in the days when such literature was rather rare. These articles *by themselves* constitute a most original first-hand source for the history of the Freedom Movement in India.

The New Thought in the realm of Indian politics which Sri Aurobindo placed before his countrymen in the days of the Swadeshi Movement, shook the whole of India, at the beginning

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of the present century. It was a movement not entirely political in character but essentially a spiritual movement for the recovery of our ancient self-emancipation. The national paper called *Bande Mataram* under the able editorship of Sri Aurobindo became the main organ of revolutionary nationalism in India, giving a most powerful expression to the growing will of the people.

Bengal was the main scene of operation of the mighty revolution. The hero of that revolution was Sri Aurobindo who led his group of revolutionary youths whom he had been training for extreme forms of self-sacrifice in the service of the country and in achieving for it *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence. The primary objective of this revolution was to accomplish a moral and intellectual revolution in the minds of the countrymen to kindle in the people a burning desire for national freedom. Sri Aurobindo infused a new spirit into Indian politics which broke away from the orthodox and traditional thought which about a quarter of a century (1885-1905) the Indian National Congress had stood for.

Sri Aurobindo's views retaliated against the moderate and mendicant thought of the Congress. His philosophy of nationalism was based upon scientific foundation. Sri Aurobindo not only preached the ideal of complete Independence for India, one and undivided, but also formulated in clear logical terms a complete programme of political action including within its purview both the means of violence and non-violence, for realizing the ideal.

For Aurobindo nationalism was neither a mere political slogan nor a mere figment of idea. It was his burning passion coupled with a deep-rooted sense of religion. According to him, "Nationalism is a religion that has come from God; nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live." For many of his contemporaries, nationalism was only a political creed, but for him it was a divine mission for the resurrection of the national soul. He, unlike others, treated it as a relgion on the altar of which nothing was too dear to him to make and offering.

Freedom of India or *Swaraj* for Sri Aurobindo was the fulfilment of the ancient life of India under modern conditions, the return of the golden age of national greatness, the resumption by her of her great role of teacher and guide, self-liberation of the people for the final fulfilment of the Vedantic ideal in politics; this is the true freedom for India.

Aurobindo's life was that of a scholar, a revolutioary and a patriot who left his indelible mark on the freedom movement in India. It earned for him an honoured place among the immortals of Indian history. In addition, the revolutionary message that he gave for the ennoblement of man in fulfilment of his destiny as a living part of the Supreme Divinity, and the life divine that he promised him on this earth has made him a world figure whose importance has grown with the passage of time.

It goes to the credit of Sri Aurobindo that he gave a message that differed from the traditional interpretation of life after death, the abandonment of this material world and the seeking of a supernatural world that could come only after death, leaving God to be sought outside his life, and the life divine to be looked for in the life after death. Sri Aurobindo was convinced that one could live in this world and yet be able to live the life divine, if only man understood his true nature and made the necessary effort to realise its potential. He based his faith on the theory of evolution. All life was evolution, for the grosser to the finer, from the powerless to the powerful, from the dependent to the independent. Man was a supreme example of this principle of evolution; and yet man had failed to carry the principle forward to its logical conclusion of bringing God down to the earth and making man lead a godly life, here and now and on the earth, instead of waiting for death to lead him to heaven. This, he said, was due to the fact that man had failed to realise that after the development of supermind; and that after the development of Science-consciousness came the development of super-consciousness that found its being in spirituality. The deliverate cultivation of the supramental was the path that the human evolution had to follow if human destiny of divinity was to find fulfilment on this earth. To do this, man has to recognise himself as a part of the divine; and to get this recognition, he had to surrender himself wholly to the divine and treat his life on earth as no more than to live as a part of the divine rather than as himself. Having surrendered himself to the divine, man has to seek the divine within himself by an integral yoga that combines the three-fold path of knowledge, work and devotion; and having found the divine within himself and experienced his identity with the divine that is all around him, man has to return to his normal life on earth, but now functioning as a part as well as instrument of divinity.

Sri Aurobindo's message is very much akin to what Lord Krishna gave in the *Gita* (Song Divine). Man, said Lord Krishna, in his eternal discourse to Arjun, was a part of his own divinity. Wherever you see, you see ME, he asserted. All individuals are equal before ME, said Krishna and all of them have it in their power to reach My state and realise themselves as part of my universal consciousness. The future depended upon what man did with his present and what efforts he made to release himself from the hold of the animal nature and raise himself with the help of the divine light with which he was also endowed from birth. He should follow the path of knowledge, work and devotion with his mind firmly fied on the vision of the Divine, to whom he should surrender completely. This yoga would lead him to the union with Divinity.

In Aurobindo we find a true poet, a prophet of nationalism, an original political thinker and a great lover of humanity.

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